



THE INDEPENDENT

No. 3,143

FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 1996

WEATHER: Chilly with occasional drizzle

(44SP) 40p

The Tabloid

Carol Sarler:
Why Marje's death
caused a storm

Comment

Suzanne Moore:
Sarah the scapegoat

page 19



Cassandra: 'No one but a fool would fight on so many fronts ... issues could leave Blair isolated'

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Conservative and Labour assassins came out of the shadows last night, threatening John Major and Tony Blair, and further shaking the unity that both parties are seeking to present to voters.

Lord Tebbit warned from the Right that if the Prime Minister ever tried to bind Britain into European Monetary Union, he would destroy the Conservative Party - with freedom-loving Tories joining others to create a new potential party of government.

From the Left, an anonymous Labour MP writing as "Cassandra" in *Tribune*, the left-wing weekly, warned that Mr Blair had sown the seeds of his own destruction - making so many enemies that he faced a leadership coup if he became prime minister.

The coincidental attacks revealed the depth of feeling in both parties against the direction being taken by the leaders. Mr Major, balancing precariously on the single currency fence; Mr Blair forcing the pace of *New Labour* in the face of a Parliamentary party, much of which retains traditional Labour values.

With everything still to fight for in the

'Tony Blair and his henchfolk need to wake up, and fast, to the fact that the Tories are starting to roll'

Leading article, page 17

long-running campaign for the next election, inflation up 0.6 percentage points to 2.7 per cent last month, and the latest MORI opinion poll showing the Tories up five points in a fortnight, yesterday's exposure of party tensions injected added zest to the battle.

Lord Tebbit told a meeting of the right-wing Conservative 2000 Foundation last night that a Parliament composed largely of "pygmies" had accepted a "slide towards being little more than a provincial assembly with subordinate powers to legislate over a shrinking portion of our national affairs." He found Mr Major's stance over the 48-hour Working Time Directive humiliating, with his talk of bargaining for EU pledges to be honoured.

The former Conservative Party chairman then added insult to injury, saying there was little difference between the position taken by Mr Major and Mr Blair on monetary union; that they were both straining every sinew to argue that

it should not be an election issue. "It is time Mr Major realised that an attempt by a Conservative government to shackle this country into a monetary union, which could not lead to a political union, the state called Europe, would not just split the present Conservative Party," Lord Tebbit said. "It would destroy it."

"All those Conservatives who believe freedom, independence and democracy matter above all other political programmes would leave to join with those of other parties or none who shared that view. Such an alliance need not be a single issue party. It could be a potential party of government."

It emerged yesterday that ministers' fear of the currency controversy had led them to block backbench demands for a full Commons debate about three EU documents on monetary union.

Members of the European Legislation Committee put down a Commons motion demanding a debate, but they

have no power to force the issue on to the floor of the House.

Monetary union also featured as one of the internal Labour crises that faced Mr Blair if he was elected Prime Minister, according to *Tribune's* "Cassandra".

The author, described as a "senior" MP with front-bench experience, said that the single currency, taxation and public spending, the minimum wage, trade union rights, and devolution were all on the immediate agenda for a Labour Government.

"No one but a fool would choose to fight on so many fronts, yet all these issues will come to a head by the end of next year and could combine to leave the leader isolated and weakened beyond recovery."

"With Robin Cook having built the strongest reputation since John Smith," the article said, "there will be no shortage of MPs during next year's summer of discontent prepared to accept that the damage caused by an internal palace coup will be less of a problem for the party in the long-run than the greater risk of being led by a leader whose policies and personal beliefs are shared by only a small minority."



Tebbit: 'An attempt to shackle this country into monetary union would destroy the party'

I started, so now I'll finish ...

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

"I've started so I'll finish," says Magnus Magnusson, and yesterday the BBC announced he will indeed finish - for good. A quarter of a century of interrogations of the notorious black chair draw to a close next year, with the end of *Mastermind*.

Launched in September 1972, the cerebral quiz has become as much a part of Britain's popular culture as *Coronation Street*. But the BBC said yesterday that the show was drawing to the end of its natural life. "Although the programme is looking as fresh and vital as ever, and is attracting a wide range of contestants - from punk rockers to vicars - no programme lasts forever," said John Whiston, head of youth and entertainment features for BBC Television.

The BBC is working on plans for a documentary to mark the passing of the series, and a "spectacular final". New ideas are also being developed for shows "to take the tradition of *Mastermind* for the future".

Much of *Mastermind*'s success was due to its unflappably grave host, Magnusson, who was occasionally forced to stop the clock when he stumbled over a particularly abstruse pronunciation.

The Icelandic-born presenter, who is writing a book of memoirs, was knighted in 1989 but cannot use his title, because he is not British.

He was consulted about the decision and agreed with it, the BBC said.

"Every good thing has to come to an end - and I would rather it ended with a bang than a whimper. We will be retiring from the scene when we are still on the crest, and I shall treat this last series as a celebration," the presenter commented.

Mastermind questions answered

The highest total score (41) was achieved by Kevin Ashman in 1995. His specialist subjects were Martin Luther King and civil rights movement, the history of the Western film and the Zulu war.

The show was created by Bill Wright, inspired by the grillings Germans gave him as a POW.

The chair is the original chair, used from the first series to the present day. It

In fact, *Mastermind* had fallen from a high of 20m viewers in its early years in a prime-time slot. As interest waned, it was moved to Monday nights, where it was watched by less than 6 million earlier this year.

But it has been a touchstone for some of the social changes since the early 1970s, not least the huge growth of interest in trivia, which has made fortunes for those who cashed in on the fascination.

The second-longest running quiz on television - second only to *Antiques Roadshow* - its format was created by Bill Wright, a prisoner of war in Germany, to echo the inquisitorial atmosphere in the camps. His main prop was the black chair, in which contestants nervously awaited Mr Magnusson's rapid-fire questions on general knowledge or a special topic of their choice. These have ranged from British poisoners to punk rock and skeeving.

The sinister title music was also devised to induce the tension of a Nazi war camp. Entitled *Approaching Monce* by Neil Richardson, it was commissioned to create a mood of impending doom.

Leading article, page 17

is a hybrid of two commercially available (in 1972) chairs.

Of the 23 winners, 16 are men and 7 are women.

A taxi driver Fred Housego, tube driver Christopher Hughes and a hospital driver Ian Meadows were winners between 1980 and 1985.

It is TV's second longest running quiz show after *Question of Sport*.



British forces off to Africa today

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

A British general flew to the US by Concorde yesterday to finalise the size, shape and mission of the international force to intervene in Zaire.

As ambassadors to the United Nations met in New York, Lieutenant-General Alex Harley, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments), was heading for urgent talks in Washington.

The first British reconnaissance teams, including 40 specialists from various branches of

the armed forces, leave for Africa today.

Michael Portillo, Secretary of State for Defence, told the Commons: "We must prepare ourselves now for action." He said British troops would not go if he did not think the mission was "achievable" and said the rules of engagement still needed to be established.

But a large British force, probably headed by 5th Airborne Brigade headquarters, is expected to leave very soon. The international force will be deployed under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, which sanctions action by land, sea and air to restore peace between belligerent parties. Although it will focus on humanitarian aid, it will be able to act in a much tougher fashion than UN troops in Bosnia were able to.

Further reports, pages 2 and 15

An ostrich dish to die for

Katherine Butler
Brussels

Diners in some of Europe's trendiest restaurants are faced with an alarming dilemma after the outbreak of the latest food scare. A tropical disease which in humans causes massive haemorrhaging and degeneration of the body's organs. EU scientists and veterinary experts advised the ban after the death of a worker in a South African ostrich abattoir. Fifteen other people are reported to be

seriously ill following exposure to the infection in the same province.

Congo-Crimean fever is a tick-borne disease which in humans causes internal and external bleeding leading to the collapse of body organs. It is fatal in about 30% of cases. Veterinary experts suspect the infection may be more virulent in ostriches than in other animals. South African researchers are conducting urgent research to establish the risks to human health.

The hen, which could be disastrous for South Africa's thriving ostrich industry, has angered the authorities in Pretoria who said they would lodge an official complaint given that the outbreak was confined to one slaughterhouse.

The EU imports about 800 tonnes a year of ostrich meat from South Africa, according to the European Ostrich Association.

South Africa's industry is by far the biggest: of the 200,000 animals slaughtered annually, 160,000 are raised there.

South Africa pioneered ostrich farming over 100 years ago but the industry is in its infan-

Lolita Wheeler



cy in Europe. There are some 5,000 ostrich farmers in Europe, mostly in Holland, and more in the US.

Ironically, demand for ostrich, kangaroo and other exotic meats has soared in the wake of the BSE scare which has caused consumption of beef to fall by up to 40%.

With a taste and a texture somewhere between chicken and beef, it is served grilled like steak.

It had started to take off in Britain in the last year (unlike the bird, which is flightless). But the latest scare is likely to do it no good, even though it is only supplies from South Africa which have been questioned.

Most of the ostrich meat eaten in Britain comes from domestic producers, and there is no reason to think it carries any health risk at all. Our beef may be suspect, but good old traditional British ostrich is still perfectly safe to eat.

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BT has begun negotiations with the Government in an attempt to remove its protection against takeovers provided since privatisation by the "golden share" in the company. Page 20

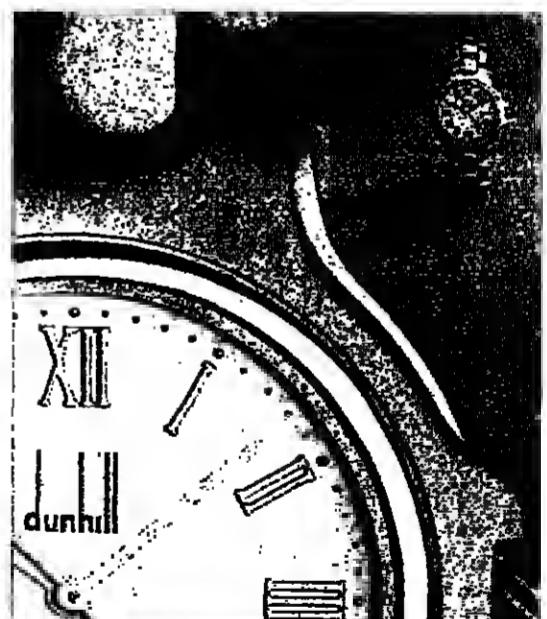
Thatcher warning

Baroness Thatcher told her Chinese hosts in Peking of her dismay at recent harsh sentences for dissidents, warned China not to block access to the Internet, and predicted that economic reform would lead to changes in the way the country is governed. Page 12

Cash for sport

Britain's Olympic medallists welcomed the largest funding package for sport. It will provide millions to help talented individuals. Page 6

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news

A ringside view at Belshazzar's Feast

It was one of those days when no one could agree what country they were living in.

Recently all parties have signed up for the idea that morals are declining, children revolting, parents hopeless, teachers heroic or feckless (according to whether or not they get beaten up), dangerous mental patients marauding, stalkers stalking and our armed forces are the best in the world. All this is uncontroversial.

But when the economy is the subject of debate, this gloomy consensus goes out of the window. Sir Sydney Chapman (Con Chipping Barnet) started it at Prime Minister's Question Time with praise for the latest fall in unemployment, "the



DAVID AARONOVITCH

largest for two years, underlining yet again the success of the Government's policies".

Yes, said the PM, joblessness was falling "in a way that cannot be said of anywhere else in Europe". Once, of course, it was rising in a way that could not be said of anywhere else in Europe - but that was due to adverse trade cycles.

So here we have a picture which - like the medieval Allegory of Good Government in Siena Town Hall - depicts the British Paradise; a scene of industrial happiness, where contented cod-piece citizens bustle about their trade, while dusky foreign merchants and investors (dazzled by what they see) wander amongst the white, positive-equated towers.

Such is not Labour's view. What about today's rise in inflation, asked Tony Blair; inflation which was leading to a sharp rise in long-term interest rates. How could all this be squared with the PM's statements about his inflation targets? In his Allegory of Bad Government, an indebted peo-

ple are encouraged by a squalid leadership to ignore the shabbiness around them, the broken tiles and dead dogs, and spend, spend as though there was tomorrow.

Only after the next election will the bills fall due and the children start to die.

The Prime Minister had quite a simple way of explaining the divergence between these two images - the idiocy of Mr Blair and anyone who agreed with him. "I know that the retail price figures are complex to understand" ("Oooh, he's getting nasty!" thought the Tory backbenchers, wriggling happily), "So I will explain them to the Right Honourable Gentleman" ("Oh yes!", they

murmured). Mr Blair persisted with one of those Brownian league tables that we are always near the bottom of.

Back came a rampant John Major. "He really doesn't understand!" ("Yes, yes, yes!" they cried). "It's genuine, he doesn't understand it!" ("Oh! oh! oh!") "They are as incapable of running the economy as they are of understanding it!" ("More! More!" they chorused, in something close to an ecstasy of nastiness).

When Tony got up for his third bite he could hardly be heard. Extraordinary animalistic yells, not unlike those that must have been heard round the Colosseum on Eat the Christian Day, or during the best bit

of Belshazzar's Feast, almost drowned him out. The louder it got, the more the Labour leader resorted to visual communication - in the form of an upthrust index finger - as though he might puncture the brown, flatulent bubble of Tory noise in front of him. He didn't.

When he sat down, a happy Major rubbed it in. October's inflation, he said, was the "fourth best we have known in October since the war". Clearly Good Government. But by the time I had got back to my word-processor Labour's computerised rapid-rebuttal unit had calculated that "since 1956, inflation was lower in October 1958/59/60/63/64/67/73 and 94". Bad Government, obviously.

significant shorts

Charges over £70m 'drug laundering'

A money dealer has been charged with laundering £70m of drugs proceeds, it emerged last night. Ussama el-Kurd, owner of the Notting Hill Exchange *house de change* in west London, was charged with converting the sterling into assorted currencies, knowing or suspecting the money to be the proceeds of drug trafficking.

A Customs and Excise spokesman said that el-Kurd, of Notting Hill Gate, was charged under the Drugs Trafficking Act 1994 and remained in custody until a later date following an appearance yesterday before City of London magistrates court.

Governors to decide fate of five-year-old

School governors were meeting last night to decide whether to confirm the permanent exclusion of a five-year-old boy, Ryan Harrison, from Birchfield Primary School, Gildersome, Leeds, for allegedly biting another pupil - a charge his mother denies. If permanently excluded, he would join the handful of other children at the very beginning of primary school whom teachers have decided are too disruptive to handle. Leeds City Council said the school's head had acted because of Ryan's "unacceptably aggressive behaviour".

Doctors warn of toy danger

Doctors last night warned parents about a new toy craze that left a baby dead and a young girl critically ill. Both children accidentally swallowed small balloons that are being sold to increasing numbers of children as "water bombs".

In the first of the two incidents in Bradford, West Yorkshire, a six-month-old girl died after one of the balloons became trapped in her throat. Eleven days later, in the same city, a seven-year-old girl sucked the water bomb down her throat after apparently trying to blow it up as if it were a balloon.

The girl was on a life support machine in the intensive care unit of Bradford Royal Infirmary yesterday.

Universities ask to expand

Britain faces economic decline and the growth of an underclass if universities are not allowed to expand, vice-chancellors have told Sir Ron Dearing's inquiry into the future of higher education.

In its response to the inquiry, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said that anyone who could benefit from going to university should be given the chance to do so.

At present the proportion of young people entering higher education is capped at just under a third. The universities say that a rise in the number of 18-year-olds alone could swell the university population by a quarter in the next seven years. *Fran Abrams*

Protest grows over sacking

Parents protesting against the sacking of the headmaster at Cheltenham College have threatened to stop paying fees unless its governors resign.

They plan to withhold the money until Peter Wilkes, dismissed after the school dropped from number 47 to 205 in school league tables, is reinstated. An inquiry into the dispute is being carried out by Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. *Fran Abrams*

Judge attacks in-flight drink

A judge yesterday criticised airlines for making alcohol too easily available after hearing how an American high on drink and drugs turned a Virgin Airlines transatlantic trip into a "flight from hell". Staff on the flight from Orlando, Florida, to Manchester last month were so alarmed at 37-year-old James Mullally's violent behaviour that the captain ordered the flight deck doors should be locked. Mullally, from Palm Coast, Florida, who was taking medication, was sentenced at Manchester Crown Court to the maximum two years' imprisonment.

Ashdown leaves his party history in haze

John Rentoul
Political Correspondent

Is it legitimate to ask politicians if they took drugs when young? Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, insisted that it was not yesterday, when asked the question by an Oxford student journalist.

Mr Ashdown, who is opposed to the legalisation of cannabis, refused to give a direct answer when asked if he had ever taken illegal drugs by a reporter from Oxford University newspaper *Cherwell*.

Interviewed by David Black in his Westminster office, Mr Ashdown hesitated before replying: "I don't ... sorry ... I do not ... the moment you ask me that question, you immediately have the right to ask anyone else that question, and I do not accept the validity of the question."

"What people do in their privacy is entirely up to them. It's not a matter for journalists."

Just before the interview ended, Mr Ashdown asked to return to the subject and give a more considered response.

"The answer to your question is that what all of us did in some distant moment of our youth is a matter for them, but it's not a matter for politicians today."

Each of the stolen files would have contained intelligence reports on major drug traffickers,

The moment you ask that question you are entitled to go round and ask other people if," he said.

Today's edition of *Cherwell* contains only this second answer, but the whole interview was tape-recorded.

Yesterday, Mr Ashdown elaborated further: "What matters is where I stand today - I am totally opposed to the legalisation of drugs."

He said he had visited drug-ridden estates in Peckham, south London, and Moss Side, Manchester: "I suggest that anybody who believes in legalisation should do what I did - go and live there for a few days

and you will soon see the effects of drugs that are so corrosive and do damage to society. Legalisation is not an option."

The issue is divisive within the Liberal Democrats, who voted to set up an inquiry into the decriminalisation of cannabis at their 1994 party conference. The motion was moved by Chris Davies, the MP elected last year in the Littleborough and Saddleworth by-election, who was subjected to sustained attack from Labour for being "high on tax and soft on drugs".

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, has said that he has never used illegal drugs, although he did once add, in a reference he made to the Commons, said:

David Evans, the robustly populist Tory MP for Welwyn Hatfield, demanded Mr Ashdown's head. "If he has taken illegal drugs - however long ago does not matter - then he should do the honourable thing and resign from the Commons," he said.

Red faces over drugs files theft

Files detailing Customs and Excise's most sensitive operations against drugs dealers have been stolen from a car in south London, writes Ian Burrell.

The incident is the latest in a series of embarrassing revelations concerning police and customs officers which are undermining the war on organised drugs smuggling.

Each of the stolen files would have contained intelligence reports on major drug traffickers,

and you will soon see the effects of drugs that are so corrosive and do damage to society. Legalisation is not an option."

A Customs spokesman said: "We have taken what steps we can to minimise the damage caused to any operations in which the officer was involved."

A report will be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service next week on one of Britain's most serious drugs investigations.

Detectives from Thames Valley police have spent two years

with names of informants and police and customs officers working on the operation.

A Customs spokesman said: "We have taken what steps we can to minimise the damage caused to any operations in which the officer was involved."

A report will be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service next week on one of Britain's most serious drugs investigations.

Detectives from Thames Valley police have spent two years

and eight months on the relationship between one of the country's biggest drug barons, a Tory MP and police officers.

The investigation, code-named Operation Mantis, was ordered by the Police Complaints Authority after the collapsed prosecution of Brian Charrington, the mastermind of the import of 1.5 tonnes of cocaine into Teesside in 1992. The report will also refer to Tim Deval, MP for Stockton South.

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Blair branded weakest leader in memory

The following is an edited version of the article in *Tribune* by Cassandra, said to be a senior Labour MP

Given the results in Tony Blair's Road to the Manifesto plebiscite and his iron grip on the party machine, it seems both bizarre and unbelievable to suggest that he could become the shortest serving prime minister of this century. But behind the facade of unity and discipline the reality is that Tony Blair's position as leader of the Labour Party is weaker than any leader in memory.

The last time a Labour leader faced anything like a serious challenge was when Harold Wilson stood against Hugh Gaitskell in 1961. Even with such a formidable opponent, Gaitskell was able to survive.

But the success of previous Labour leaders has rested on loyal support from the right wing majority inside the Parliamentary Labour Party and a close working relationship with the main trade union leaders.

This is Blair's weakness. He is unaware of just how widespread is the dissatisfaction and outright anger at the style of his leadership and policies among those MPs who put him in the leadership. Starting with the anger over choice of a school for his son and running up to the expensive irrelevance of the *Road to the Manifesto*, I have never known Labour MPs to be so bitterly and personally critical of their leader.

Blair has also squandered the traditional loyalty of the trade union leaders. It may get good headlines in the Tory press to have your spin doctors rubbish Bill Morris and John Edmonds but this overlooks the fact Blair will have to rely on them to stave off conference defeats once Labour is in government.

To make matters worse there is also the blunt reality that Tony Blair is in a minority within his own Shadow Cabinet on key issues concerning the welfare state and trade union rights. In the past, leaders could rely upon a solid block of supporters in the Cabinet, but the scale of mutual loathing between Tony Blair, John Prescott, Gordon Brown and Margaret Beckett is so blatant it has become public knowledge.

It is against this background that a Labour government will take office next spring and face several crises. Within the first few months, Blair will have to resolve the conflict between Brown and Cook on whether or not Britain should be in the first wave of EU states joining monetary union. Gordon Brown intends to introduce a mini-Budget to replace what we inherit from Kenneth Clarke thus opening all the major fissures on taxation and public spending.

Blair has also squandered the traditional loyalty of the trade union leaders. It may get good headlines in the Tory press to have your spin doctors rubbish Bill Morris and John Edmonds but this overlooks the fact Blair will have to rely on them to stave off conference defeats once Labour is in government.

The attempt to push through Scottish and Welsh devolution is unlikely to be made any easier, whatever the outcome of the referendum plans, as English voters will have no say and those dinosaurs on the back benches who are opposed to devolution will not feel inhibited about re-running the wrecking game that wasted so much of our time in the Seventies. While it has, so far, been only the hard Left and the Trotskyite groupies who have been ranting on about these issues, once pre-election unity is no longer required, all these changes have the potential to reawaken the sort of civil war that disfigured the party during the Bennite challenge.

No one but a fool would choose to fight on so many fronts yet all these issues will come to a head by the end of next year and could combine to leave the leader isolated and weakened beyond recovery.

With Robin Cook having built the strongest parliamentary reputation since John Smith, there will be no shortage of MPs prepared to accept that the damage caused by an internal palace coup will be less of a problem in the long run than the greater risk of being led by a leader whose policies and personal beliefs are shared by only a small minority of the PLP.

When power starts to slip away, Blair will find that rule books and constitutions cannot ward off the real political forces that come into play. Labour could soon find that it too has the "men in grey suits" it thought were unique feature of the Tory party.

In Radio Times this week, Andrew Duncan analyses the neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks, about his problems, his patients and his personality. You'd be mad to miss it.

RadioTimes

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT.

مكتبة المعلم

Governors to decide fate of five-year-old
ant shorts

A gay service has become the biggest row since women's ordination

Andrew Brown

The service of gay and lesbian celebration at Southwark Cathedral tomorrow has become the focus of the biggest row in the Church of England since the ordination of women.

More than 2,000 people will travel from all over the country for a day-long festival to mark the 20th anniversary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. It will be attended by three English bishops, supported by the heads of four Anglican churches around the world, among them Desmond Tutu – and attacked by traditionalists with an impassioned mixture of prayer and propaganda.

More than 50 churches will hold gatherings of prayer and repentance against the service. Most of them belong to Reform, a network of conservative evangelical churches which is also opposed to the ordination of women. The Reform churches have threatened various degrees of separation from the official church over the issue.

Reform leaders insist they are not homophobic, and that they treat gays as individuals compassionately. "This service is not about a pastoral problem" said the Rector of Jesmond, the Rev David Holloway, yesterday. "You're dealing with a political issue, about how to order society and the church." The service has shocked evangelical opinion inside and outside the church.

Supporters of the movement see it as an opportunity for the church to show the world that homosexuals can have an honoured place, after centuries of persecution. Caught in the middle are the cathedral authorities, and most bishops of the Church of England, who feel they can neither support open homosexuality nor force it back into the closet.

The only thing to unite both sides is agreement that the Church's present position is ridiculous and illogical. In fact, there are at least three positions. The first, adopted by the General Synod in 1987, is that "homosexual genital acts ... fall short of the ideal ... and must be met with a call to repentance". This coexists uneasily with a House of Bishops' report in 1991 which said the laity might in some circumstances have homosexual relations, but priests might not. Both these statements contradict the third, unofficial position, which was the one actually adopted by the House of Bishops until very recently: "Don't do it" in the street and frighten the horses."

The most recent official position – the bishops' 1991 report – is not far in practice from the position of other mainstream denominations, such as Catholics and Methodists. There, just as in the Church of England, it is possible for homosexual lay people to be accepted in some congregations. What makes the Church of England a uniquely difficult case is the existence of a fairly large and self-confident body of gay priests.

Both Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, and the former Bishop of Durham, Dr David Jenkins, admitted to having knowingly



All God's creatures: Man and woman in stained glass at Southwark Cathedral. Photograph: David Rose

Battle hymn of the gay community

A hymn written for the Southwark festival by the former Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, the Rt Rev Derek Rawcliffe.

Onward, Christian homos,
Marching out with pride,
Queers and fags and drag queens
Walking side by side.
We are not divided,
All one body we,
Gay and lesbian Christians,
For equality.

Onward Christian homos

Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride

We will not be hidden,
We will not be dumb.
Out of fearful closets
Gladly we have come.
Christian gays and lesbians,
We will now be heard,
Claiming our acceptance,
By our loving Lord

Onward Christian homos
Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride

Onward Christian homos,
Raise a joyful song.
Though the church may spurn us,

That's where we belong.
Bishops shall not fight us.
Homophobes must flee.
Hand in hand we celebrate
Our sexuality.

Onward Christian homos
Marching side by side,
Glad to own our gayness,
Glad to walk with pride

ordained practising homosexuals. Several serving diocesan bishops admit it privately. Many more shelter the homosexual clergy they have inherited.

When the Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Rev Roy Williamson, suggested last year that he too, would be prepared to ordain practising homosexuals if they met all the other criteria for ordination, he was rapidly made to retract and forced off the board of an evangelical society. His diocese covers Lon-

don south of the Thames, while the diocese of London covers the city north of the river.

The two have much the highest concentration of gay priests in England. One well-placed observer suggested to me that under the previous Bishop of London, the Rt Rev David Hope, there were about 200 priests in the diocese who had active homosexual relationships. Dr Hope himself was one of often bishops "outed" by a pressure group, and subsequently it is a simple issue of justice.

announced that his sexuality was a "grey area", though one that he had never explored. He is now Archbishop of York.

There is no prospect of an early resolution. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, has repeatedly appealed for Christians to concentrate on more urgent matters. But conservatives, like Dr Holloway, see this as an issue on which they can defeat creeping liberalism, while to the gays and their supporters, it is a simple issue of justice.

Farewell to innocence as shops ban children from seeing Santa alone

Jojo Moyes

It was one of the more depressing revelations of Christmas present – the news that some shops have banned unaccompanied children from sitting on Santa's knee because of fears of child abuse allegations.

Children's welfare charities and a leading children's lawyer yesterday backed the decision by shops, including Selfridges, to follow the policy, in order to avoid any threat of legal action.

Peggy Ray, a member of the Solicitors' Family Law Association's children's committee, said it was "common sense" to have a guardian in Santa's grotto.

"It is a potential opportunity for a determined abuser to abuse so as a matter of common sense and good practice it would be advisable to have another person there," Ms Ray said.

"I don't think shops have to check their Santas out. Having a register of convicted paedophiles would help, although there are a huge number of sus-



Seasonal image no longer: shops fearing legal action will no longer allow youngsters to sit on Santa's knee

pected paedophiles out there who would not be on it."

A spokesman for the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children said:

"Some young people can be scared of visiting unfamiliar environments and meeting strangers. The NSPCC would recommend that adults accompany their children when visiting Santa Claus."

Richard Cain, manager of Clay's Garden Centre in Sunderland, where children must be accompanied by a parent, said it was a sensible precaution. "It is just a common sense policy that we have had for a couple of years. It's a sign of our times."

Selfridges in Oxford Street said it had always required parents to be present when

children entered Santa's Grotto. A spokeswoman said: "We have had the same Santa for years and he knows how to behave with children. But we are dealing with young children and they can be quite frightened. We want to make it the best experience for them."

She later added that the policy of insisting children be accompanied was less to do with fears of abuse allegations than parents using Santa's Grotto as a creche while they did their shopping.

Jane Kilpatrick, associate director of Kidscape, a charity which aims to help prevent child abuse, said yesterday it was necessary to maintain a sense of perspective.

"We know that children need positive role models. What could be more positive than Santa? We have to get a grip here," she said. "It's great that shops are aware... but having said that if we can't trust Santa, what's the point?"

Ms Kilpatrick added that she knew of no occasions where a Santa had been accused of

'The gay movement is our cathedral if it is anyone's'

There is something ironic at best, and frightening at worst, that the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement's 20th anniversary gathering in Southwark Cathedral tomorrow should need defending, or justifying.

Homosexual acts are legal – and have been for nearly 30 years. The Church of England, along with most of the other mainstream denominations, has concluded that homosexuality is an identity not a deed, that gay is something that you are, rather than something that you do – and a state of being *cannot* be of nature (and God's nature) be a sin". (That some gay people would dispute this definition is irrelevant in relation to whether or not the Church of England should allow the meeting its own position and definition are what count here.)

Despite these facts, rampant prejudice – in the forms of increased danger of violence, employment discrimination, housing restrictions, permitted public behaviour, access to

children, to name but a few – continues.

Homosexuals – quite separate from their own actual sexual practice – are

The case for



Sara Maitland, novelist and theologian

treated as and feel themselves to be marginalised, villainised and scapegoated. This makes lesbians and gay men, as individuals and as a community, a group who have a specific, gospel-based, Jesus-led, call on the Church's charity and support.

The whole theory of sexuality is currently an issue of interest to the wider Christian community: all Christians have an obligation to discuss, debate and consider it. A group of Christians who are personally concerned with this pressing question wish to come together and do so.

LGCM is a Christian organisation. Its members therefore are a part of the people of God, the Body of Christ. It is our cathedral as much as

anyone's.

Simply, the burden of proof lies not with LGCM but with those who object to the LGCM gathering, because the only "reason" I can think of is that there are people who cannot tolerate anyone else having prayer and fun from which they have let their fears exclude them.

'The Provost just cannot hope to get away with it'

The case against

The Rev Geoffrey Kirk, of St Stephen's, Lewisham

most of these issues to its own satisfaction. It has beliefs in absolute parity between homosexual and heterosexual relations in the ethical understanding of the church. This is far from the position of the General Synod or even of the House of Bishops in its document, *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

Such a process of discernment is necessarily slow and reflective. The "rights" of homosexuals – if they are rights – are not the only issues at stake. As with other contentious issues – marriage discipline, for example, or the ordination of women – fundamental theological questions are raised.

The

Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement has effectively decided

should be open to all who wish to pray in them. He does not shy from the financial dealings of city companies who request carol services, and in the same way he does not ask questions about what the members of the LGCM respectively, get up to under their duvets.

This bold and mendacious Erastianism must command a grudging admiration. But the provost cannot hope to get away with it. The decision of the Chapter at Southwark to allow the celebration cannot be passed off as open or even-handed. They chose to favour, in an all-out political campaign for the soul of the Church of England, an opinion which the church at large has only recently rejected.

If they uphold the principles and aims of LGCM let them say so unequivocally. Then at least they could hope to command a degree of respect.

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news

HIV surgeon is cleared to operate

Landmark decision by West Glasgow NHS Trust gives hope to infected health workers

Nick Harris

A Glasgow surgeon yesterday became the first doctor in Britain infected with the HIV virus to be given the all-clear to resume surgical practice.

Professor George Browning, 55, an internationally renowned ear, nose and throat specialist, was given the news by his employers, the West Glasgow NHS Trust, following a year's deliberation and advice from an advisory body at the Department of Health. He said: "It's fantastic news. It seems like an awfully long wait for the decision, but now it's been made, I can get on with things. I'm in superb health and hopefully I've got a long career ahead of me."

Since going public with his HIV status nearly two years ago, Professor Browning has been restricted to a non-surgical role, conducting clinics and teaching at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and at Gartnavel General Hospital.

He said: "The hospitals have quite lengthy waiting lists for the surgery I perform, so my return will help with that." He hopes to be back in theatre before Christmas.

Professor Browning specialises in problems of the middle ear and the type of surgery he will undertake is performed with long-handled instruments, where the surgeon is "remote" from the patient. He is now able to recommence five such otological procedures, which are deemed risk-free to patients by the Department of Health UK Advisory Panel for Health Care Workers Infected with Blood-Borne Viruses (UKAP), the expert body to whom he first appealed for advice about his case in October last year.

"Basically, I will be able to perform all forms of surgery that would help a patient's hearing," said Professor Browning. "If you look at the medical facts, there is no reason why I shouldn't go back. Patient fears are not grounded in fact, and it is my job to dispel such fears."

Precautions will be taken with tool-handling procedure, as well as normal procedure, to guarantee safety. He will also be subject to regular check-ups.



Safe hands: Professor George Browning (Inset) yesterday after the announcement that he can resume ENT surgery

Photograph: Drew Farrell

No British health worker has ever transmitted the HIV virus to a patient. According to International Disease control studies, there has only ever been one case of a patient being infected by a health worker, a Florida dentist who failed to take sufficient precautionary measures. There is much more likelihood of a health worker catching the virus because of exposure to patient blood.

Medical director of the West Glasgow NHS Trust, Dr Adam Bryson, said that all patients joining the waiting list for otological surgery will be asked if they object to having a surgeon who is HIV positive. "No one will be under any pressure to give their consent," he said. "However, I hope Professor Browning will be shown support by their choice."

No patients will be disadvantaged by opting not to be treated by Professor Browning. Professor Browning, who is married with three grown-up children, is bisexual and believes he contracted the virus through gay sex. In December 1994, the press discovered that a surgeon in Glasgow had tested HIV positive and named the wrong doctor. Professor Browning made his decision public to avoid further confusion.

Since appealing to UKAP a year ago, he has been waiting while his employers, with whom the final decision rested, considered his case. The West Glasgow NHS Trust set up a special working committee to consider patient safety as well as medical, ethical and legal issues. The Chairman of the Trust, Derck Mason, said: "As a provider of public health care services, our priority has been to handle our deliberations prudently and responsibly."

Nick Partridge, chief executive of the Terence Higgins Trust, welcomed the decision and said: "It is clear that Professor Browning presents no risk to his patients. This is a sensible and mature decision based on the reality of how HIV can be transmitted rather than on public and media hysteria."

By the end of 1995, there had been 25,635 reported cases of HIV infection in the UK. Yesterday's announcement will set a precedent in the UK for health workers rights. Professor Browning said that he hopes the decision would encourage other infected health workers to come forward without fear of discrimination.

"Equally, it means they have a precedent with lines of discussion as to what is and what is not safe for patients."

For employees who work in non-medical areas, the case may also be a landmark, leading to fewer barriers to employment, such as insurance costs to employers which are 200 to 300 per cent higher for infected workers.

Professor Browning said: "The issue is public knowledge, not HIV."



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Teacher appeals against bullies' ruling

Fran Abrams
Education Correspondent

A teacher who let a pupil smack a group of bullies with a ruler was given a final written warning yesterday after refusing to make a firm undertaking not to do the same again.

Brenda Davies was told at the end of a two-hour disciplinary hearing that if the incident at Tennyson Road Primary School in Luton was repeated, she could be sacked.

Mrs Davies was removed from her infant class last week and asked to teach older children after she allowed five-year-old Joe Middleton to smack six other children on the hand.

She has defended her actions, and has written to the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, to appeal for her support. Yesterday, she said that she had acted in line with the school's anti-bullying policy.

"The headmaster maintains that what I did amounted to corporal punishment. I believe my action was in the children's best interests. I love children. I do whatever is best for them," she said.

Mrs Davies has 14 days in which to decide whether to appeal against the decision.

However, a statement from parents of all the children involved, including Joe Middleton, condemned the teacher for contacting the media.

"She escalated a simple playground game which had got a bit too boisterous into a major incident. We as a group of mothers are working together to heal the rifts that have now been created between our children," it said.

A spokesman for Bedfordshire County Council, one of whose officers attended the hearing with the school's head teacher, said Mrs Davies would return to school today.

"For now, everyone is concerned to ensure that the school gets back to its normal routine, and that it is able to concentrate on what really matters here, and that is the continuing education of all the children," he said.

news

£40m prize from lottery gives British sport its biggest ever win

Mike Rowbottom
Athletics Correspondent

Britain's Olympic medallists yesterday welcomed the announcement of the largest funding package for sport in the country's history.

Announcing the initiative yesterday, John Major, the Prime Minister, said the Government would use the fund to put "sport back where it belongs - at the heart of school life".

The Sports Council will use £150m-a-year "Talent Fund" to offer subsistence grants to talented individuals, on the back of an expected boost to National Lottery funding from the new mid-week draw.

The World Class Performance Programme, launched yesterday, will see new funding for up to 4,500 competitors who will share £20m in annual individual grants from National Lottery money, with another £20m going to governing bodies. The first individual payments are due next March.

The grants will be particularly welcome after Britain's disastrous showing in the Atlanta Olympic Games earlier this year.

"This is going to be a great confidence booster for British competitors," said Paul Palmer, winner of Britain's only swimming medal at the Atlanta Olympics. "When you line up for an Olympic final, there is a tendency to think your opponents are bound to be that much better prepared. This means we can compete on level terms in future."

The new scheme offers grants of £15,000 to £17,000 to Britain's best sportsmen and women, although "elite individuals" - those ranked in the world's top 10 with world or Olympic medal potential - could get a maximum annual



Nicky Gooch: 'Without my parents' support I wouldn't have been able to make it' Photograph: Alisport

award of £28,000. The question of whether payments will be tax-free is still a matter of negotiation.

Ben Ainslie, the 19-year-old Olympic silver medalist in the Laser class sailing competition, said the new system would help him with travelling costs and allow him to take his coach to more events. Last year he only went to two out of 18 regattas.

"I also think it will keep a lot more people in the sport now they know this funding is available," he added.

"But I don't think it could take me that one step further."

That kind of money would enable Palmer to locate himself closer to a top-class training facility. Before the Atlanta Games, he had to use a 25-metre school pool in Yarborough, Lincolnshire. In term time, he had to rope off a lane from splashing children; outside term time the pool was shut.

"It got me to an Olympic silver, which isn't bad," he said.

Details of the plan were announced on the second anniversary of the sale of the first National Lottery ticket.

There has been widespread criticism of the lengthy consultation period since the announcement on April 1 last year that Lottery funding could be made available for athletes as well as facilities for competition and training.

The delay appeared even less acceptable in the light of the poor overall British medal tally in Atlanta. But Sir Roden

Walker, the Sports Council chairman, defended the procedure.

"We could have launched this programme earlier," he said. "We could have gone off half-cocked, but we weren't ready... As a result of this careful planning, the programme is bigger, better and directly meets the needs of the coaches and competitions."

The new annual figure of £20m for individual competitions is 10 times what the Sports Aid Foundation, the main funding

body for the last 21 years, has been able to offer.

"We were operating with inadequate resources, which meant we had to be extremely selective," said Noel Nagle, the SAF director. "We could only help 150 members of the British team for Atlanta, which left around 200 others unsupported. For the next Olympics, this scheme is going to help every body."

The new scheme will be aimed in with former Test cricketer Sir Colin Cowdrey's ini-

Funds no longer on ice for skate star

Nicky Gooch believes that the latest announcement on National Lottery funding for competitors could be good news for him. But he is waiting for confirmation before he starts celebrating, writes Mike Rowbottom.

The 23-year-old from Roehampton, who earned a speed-skating bronze medal at the 1994 Winter Olympics, has seen his level of assistance fluctuate alarmingly in the last three years.

Before his breakthrough, he found himself in the position common to so many British sportsmen and women in recent years - scraping a living, relying on the support of parents and friends.

"I was getting small grants from the Sports Aid Foundation, but we were talking a matter of a few hundred pounds which was nowhere near enough," he said.

"Without my parents' support I wouldn't have been able to make it."

He was working at the Guildford Spectrum ice centre, and getting time on the ice in lieu. But even then, it was a matter of having three training sessions per week due to the pressure of bookings.

Meanwhile his rivals in Korea, Canada, the United States and Italy were all getting as much time on the ice as they needed, training full-time in specialist groups.

That was the challenge. And Gooch, as is the British way, succeeded despite everything.

"It has been such a struggle for British athletes," Gooch said. "The lack of funding has hindered everyone's development. It has basically been a case that if you haven't got a medal, you can't get a decent grant."

He hopes that yesterday's news will change all that.

vided much-needed support to sports projects right across the country, grass roots support which has seen awards made to 155 bowls clubs, 57 hockey clubs, 202 tennis clubs and many more.

"At the elite level, the Sports Council will announce soon its decision on the English National Stadium, and in the new year the United Kingdom Sports Council and my Department will announce the winning British Academy of Sport bid," she said.

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Treasure store: Sir John Soane wanted his Lincoln's Inn Fields houses kept as he left them. Photograph: David Rose

£500,000 lottery cash helps museum buy up its neighbour

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

Thousands of sketches and designs by the 18th-century architects Robert and James Adam will go on public display following a lottery grant of more than £500,000 to Sir John Soane's Museum, one of the unique gems of London.

The second anniversary of the National Lottery was also marked by an award of £1.4m towards the purchase by the Woodland Trust of a 10,000-acre Highland estate.

The second largest-ever land acquisition aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the grant for Glen Finglas in Perthshire, will enable the creation of Scotland's largest broad-leaved forest and guarantee public access. The estate stretches from the shore of

Loch Venachar to the 2,883ft (879m) summit of Ben Ledi.

Taking the anniversary total to more than £2m, there were also HLF grants of £42,700 to the Yorkshire Museum for the purchase of a rare collection of 289 mineral specimens and £108,000 towards the repair of Skenfrith Parish Hall in Gwent.

Built in 1843 as a National School, the hall is now the focal point for a population of just 50 villagers.

Lauding the lottery at a press launch in the former home of the architect Sir John Soane in the City of London, Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, stressed the importance of investing in museums and galleries at times of rapid change in technology and society.

"There is a sense of turbulence and insecurity," Mrs Bot-

tomley said. "That is why there is an ever greater desire to understand our roots, to actually stop and stare and wonder and learn."

There is little sense of turbulence at the museum, which was visited by 76,000 people last year. Sir John stipulated that numbers 12 and 13 on Lincoln's Inn Fields, houses he designed and turned into a museum himself, should be left "as nearly as possible" in the state in which he left them on his death in 1837.

The collection includes two famous series of pictures by William Hogarth - *The Rake's Progress* and *The Election* - and an alabaster sarcophagus discovered in the tomb chamber of Seti I, King of Egypt in 1300BC.

The £53.816 lottery grant has enabled the Sir John Soane's Museum Society to buy the house he built in 1823 next

door to his museum. Together, the three buildings form a fine symmetrical composition on the north side of the fields.

No 14 has never been opened to the public and is the only one of the many London town houses designed by Sir John with its interiors substantially intact. The present tenants, a firm of solicitors, can admire the ceiling mouldings but might regret the lack of lift in the Grade I listed building.

The extra space will enable the museum to display parts of the collection never seen before and provide educational facilities. In particular, there will be a proper study centre for 9,000 Adam drawings. Stored in 57 bound volumes in a large former wardrobe, the collection ranges from light sketches to coloured designs for chimney pieces and ceilings.

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Furrowed ground: Shire horses from Bradford Industrial Museum preparing for a series of ploughing exhibitions at Harewood House, Leeds, starting on Sunday. Photograph: Asadour Guzelian

Tax chief 'arranged night with prostitute'

Graham Ball

An Inland Revenue official told an Old Bailey court yesterday that his boss had arranged for him to have a night out with a prostitute. He had slept with her but they had not had intercourse, he said.

Christopher Furze was giving evidence in the trial of his former colleague Michael Allcock, the tax inspector accused of accepting bribes worth more than £150,000.

Both worked at the Inland Revenue's Special Office, in an elite squad charged with reclaiming tax from wealthy foreign businessmen.

Mr Furze, who is married, said Allcock had organised a blind date for him in late 1989. Mr John Black, for the prosecution, asked him if he had any prior knowledge of what the night out was going to entail.

Mr Furze, now based in Witham, Essex, replied: "Not really," he just said, "Leave it to me." A partner was found for Mr Furze by Michelle Corrigan, a call girl and Allcock's lover.

He and Allcock had gone to a hotel in north London where they met Ms Corrigan. "We later met a friend of Michelle Corrigan's called Karen I believe, and we had an evening out." They returned to the hotel and he spent a night with "Karen".

Asked if he handed over any money, he replied: "The following morning she inferred that some payment was due and I said I had no idea about payments and referred her to Michael Allcock."

Mr Anthony Aridge, for the defence, asked Mr Furze, "Did you have sexual intercourse with 'Karen'?" to which he replied, "No." He agreed that they had been in the same bed.

Earlier he had told the jury how he had lied under instruction from Allcock to mislead senior Inland Revenue managers.

He explained how he had been seconded to work with Allcock on the case of Amawen Kalo, a multi-millionaire Lebanese, who once invested £1.5m in the Highland Spring mineral water business. The court has already heard that in July last year all charges against Mr Kalo were dropped.

In February 1989 two tax inspectors held a meeting in the Knightsbridge office of Mr Kalo's accountants. At that meeting he claimed it was agreed that the businessman should pay £50,000 in settlement for his outstanding tax bill. But according to Mr Furze, Allcock instructed him to leave out any mention of the proposed settlement from the case notes.

He further alleged that Allcock told him to lie in a letter to Inland Revenue superiors by claiming that a settlement could only be agreed on neutral territory. Allcock had suggested a meeting in the south of France though the matter had been settled in London.

Mr Furze said they stayed at the exclusive Negresco Hotel and on their second night on the Riviera were given each gambling chips by Mr Kalo, which they spent at the Monte Carlo casino. Mr Furze won £200 but Mr Allcock lost. Later Mr Furze and his wife accepted an offer to stay in Mr Kalo's holiday villa in Majorca.

Allcock denies bribery and corruption. Also charged with him are Hisham Alwan, an oil dealer from Knightsbridge, and David Shamoto, a property developer from west Kensington, who deny all charges.

The trial continues.

Girls, 13, kicked victim to death

Two girls yesterday admitted kicking to death a girl of 13 after a street fight.

The two, both now 13, admitted the manslaughter of Louise Allen. They had been charged with murder but the prosecution accepted their plea.

Mr Justice Hidden adjourned the case at Nottingham Crown Court for sentencing when evidence will be heard.

Richard Latham, QC, for the prosecution, said a fight started between one of the defendants, who was then 12, and another girl near a fairground in Corby, Northamptonshire, in April. The 12-year-old ended up astride the other girl and at that point Louise Allen, he said, pulled the 12-year-old away. The 13-year-old defendant then intervened.

He said: "It was during the next few seconds, and I use that timing advisedly, something between probably between 30 and 120 seconds that Louise Allen received injuries to her head which led to her death."

He added: "The evidence or

the witness statement suggests that the first defendant [the 13-year-old] kicked Louise Allen to the head and thereafter the second defendant did likewise."

He said: "There is no doubt that the defendants knew that what they were doing was wrong. It is acknowledged by each of them in interview. There is evidence to suggest they had fought before. But that in itself is a long way from proof of the specific intent required for murder. In particular knowledge of the consequence of such a kick in the mind of an adult cannot be assumed in the case of a child." He said the prosecution, having consulted the Crown Prosecution Service and Louise's parents, had decided it would be improper to pursue a murder charge.

Sally Bennett-Jenkins, representing the 13-year-old, said her client went to the help of her friend who was involved in a fight "who she perceived was being outnumbered two to one by the other girl and the intervention of Louise Allen".

Supermodel firm stays in the élite

The modelling agency representing Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer and Linda Evangelista yesterday won an injunction to prevent the use of its name by another firm alleged to have enticed would-be teenage models into "glamour" auditions in pubs and skittle alleys.

Elite & Premier Ltd, which has a string of supermodels in its books, was granted a temporary High Court order banning the newly-founded Elite Modelling Agency Ltd from trading under the "Elite" name pending a further court hearing.

The well-established company, founded in 1991, argued a connection with its namesake would damage its reputation and result in loss of trade.

Justio Turner, representing Elite & Premier Ltd, told the High Court his clients "were the owners of a goodwill in that name".

Outlining his client's case for an injunction, Mr Turner told Mr Justice Harman of the agency's reputation.

"The agency represents many models who are household names such as Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell and Linda Evangelista."

He then asked the judge - who is renowned for one asking "Who is Gazz?" and inquiring about Britpop band Oasis - "I don't know if your Lordship is familiar with these models?"

"Do I need to be?" replied the judge.

"I don't think so," said Mr Turner.

In discussing glamour modelling, the judge also queried the use of the word "topless".

"It means precisely the opposite," he was told.

The judge said the word was "remarkable - as if they had been cut off at the waist which is exactly what they do not mean".

"If you cut the top off it wouldn't be very interesting - what's more they would be dead. It's clearly an abuse of language by the tabloids," he said.

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8 news

The day a chat with Arthur Scargill set Sue Lawley's heart aflutter



Sue Lawley: Microphone hidden in cleavage picked up the thumping of her heart

...and other TV foibles of the famous



Arthur Scargill: Had a strange effect on interviewer Sue Lawley



Sir John Betjeman: Ditched filming in fury, and went to play golf



Della Smith: Viewers ask advice on recipes and stove technology



Kenneth Clark: Inability to memorise scripts led to autocue genre



Sir Richard Dimbleby: Spent hours secretting notes around studio



Desmond Lynam: Has little respect for broadcasters' talents

Will Wyatt, chief executive of BBC Broadcast and formerly managing director of BBC Network Television, devotes his lecture to "television presenters and their audiences". While he is lavish in his praise of the BBC's best-known names, he reveals some moments he might have preferred forgotten.

Foibles of the most famous television presenters form a part of the Royal Television Society Huw Wheldroo Memorial Lecture to be shown on BBC2.

"The guests included fast bowler Freddie Trueman and Tony Benn. After five minutes, I realised that this was the first time I had seen such terror in the eyes of interviewees. Terror, not that they would be asked something they could not answer, but that they would never be asked anything at all."

Looking back on one of the seminal documentary series in television history, *Civilisation* with Kenneth Clark, Mr Wyatt recalls that Clark could not memorise scripts and wanted to do the series from behind a desk. His producer, Michael Gill, coaxed him out on the road by taking with them an autocue and a new genre was born.

The greatest presenters had habits which they stuck to religiously. The late Sir Richard Dimbleby stayed behind in a darkened studio sticking bits of paper below camera lenses for the next day's programme — cues of names, facts and figures. He also used his cuffs.

Mr Wyatt reveals too what viewers write in to ask presenters. Della Smith is asked not just about cooking, but how to fix viewers' stoves. Barry Norman is asked not just about films but about people's local cinemas.

Ironically, in view of the fact that so many of the BBC 60th anniversary awards went to contemporary figures, Mr Wyatt, who is said to have encouraged this, devotes nearly all of the praise in his lecture to the great presenters of the past.

However, he does quote an adage from one current star presenter, Desmond Lynam, who said: "If you're a sporting star, you're a sporting star. If you don't quite make it, then you become a coach. If you can't coach, you become a journalist. If you can't spell, you become a broadcaster."

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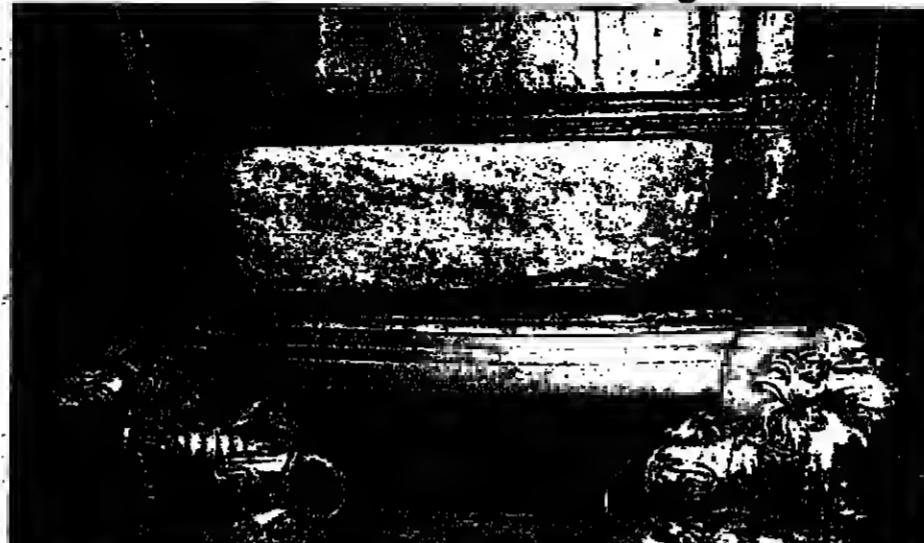
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UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND

Low profile for the Stone of Destiny as it takes the high road north



Rocking the vote: The stone leaves the abbey where it was kept beneath the Coronation Chair, centre, and, right, its return after being taken by nationalists

Photographs: PA

James Cusick

Hollywood would have at least ordered up a tartan blanket. Maybe over-dubbed the pibroch tones of a lone piper. But yesterday Her Majesty's Government merely stuffed the Stone of Destiny into the back of a Range Rover and sent it north.

The Stone of Scone, which, apart from a kidnapping fiasco in 1950, had lain under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey for 700 years, was beginning a 400-mile journey that will see it come to rest in Edinburgh Castle. The public will be able to see it from St Andrew's Day, 30

November, for a mere £5.50. As the central plank, nay cornerstone, of John Major's charm offensive towards the Scots in run-up to next year's general election, the stone appears to have been endowed with official mystical properties. The Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, and his his-

trical advisers persuaded Downing Street that its cultural power and symbolism were worth more than its 336lb in priceless public relations.

Yesterday morning the piece

of rock over which every English monarch has been crowned since 1308 was wrested from beneath the oak of the Chro-

nation Chair. As Big Ben was struck for the seventh time, police officers from the Coldstream Guards, heritage experts from Scotland and the Dean and members of Westminster Abbey surveyed the jail-gate loading of the stone, which was encased in a simple steel box. Around 11am today, having

travelled via the Caledonian Bridge on the border, the stone will come home.

It will head back south at the next coronation, however. As one Scottish Heritage expert put it: "On the journey back I think everyone from Mystic Meg to the Royal Corgis will be expected to line the M1 and wave."

Student died from rare lung ailment

Charlie Bain

An Oxford student who was believed to have died from an adult form of cot death in fact died from a rare lung disease, an inquest heard yesterday.

Rachel Steer, 16, a first-year classics student at St Hilda's College, who was described as "wonderfully bright and cheerful", was found dead in bed at her college four weeks ago after she failed to turn up to an early-morning tutorial. A post-mortem examination on her body proved inconclusive and baffled doctors, who indicated that Steer may have died from Sudden Adult Death Syndrome (Sads), a rare form of cot death.

But yesterday Sanjeev Mander, a pathologist from the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, said that Steer died of acute cardiac failure with pulmonary oedema, a condition in which blood clots on the lung prevent oxygen from reaching the heart, hindering respiration and causing instant death.

Her parents, Clifford and Christina, were not present at the inquest which took place at Oxford Coroner's Court.

Recording a verdict of death by natural causes, the Oxford Coroner, Nicholas Gardner, said that Steer died of a rare disorder. Dr Mander said: "It is nothing we can take any particular precautions against."

He added that there was no evidence of drug abuse, trans-

fusion or paracetamol on her body and the amount of alcohol she had consumed that evening was "not significant" in her death.

Steer, from Surbiton, Surrey, had gone dancing with a friend at nearby St Edmund's Hall and had drunk two bottles of beer before returning to her room at St Hilda's around midnight on Saturday 19 October.

Staff at the college were alerted on the following Monday morning after she failed to turn up for a 9am Greek tutorial.

She was found dead in her bed and there were no signs of disturbances in her room, which had been locked from the inside.

Steer, who had been at Oxford less than two weeks, had wanted to become a barrister. At Tiffin Girls' School, Kingston upon Thames, she had been regarded as an extremely talented student, destined for an outstanding career.

Her parents, Clifford and Christina, were not present at the inquest which took place at Oxford Coroner's Court.

Recording a verdict of death by natural causes, the Oxford Coroner, Nicholas Gardner, said that Steer died of a rare disorder.

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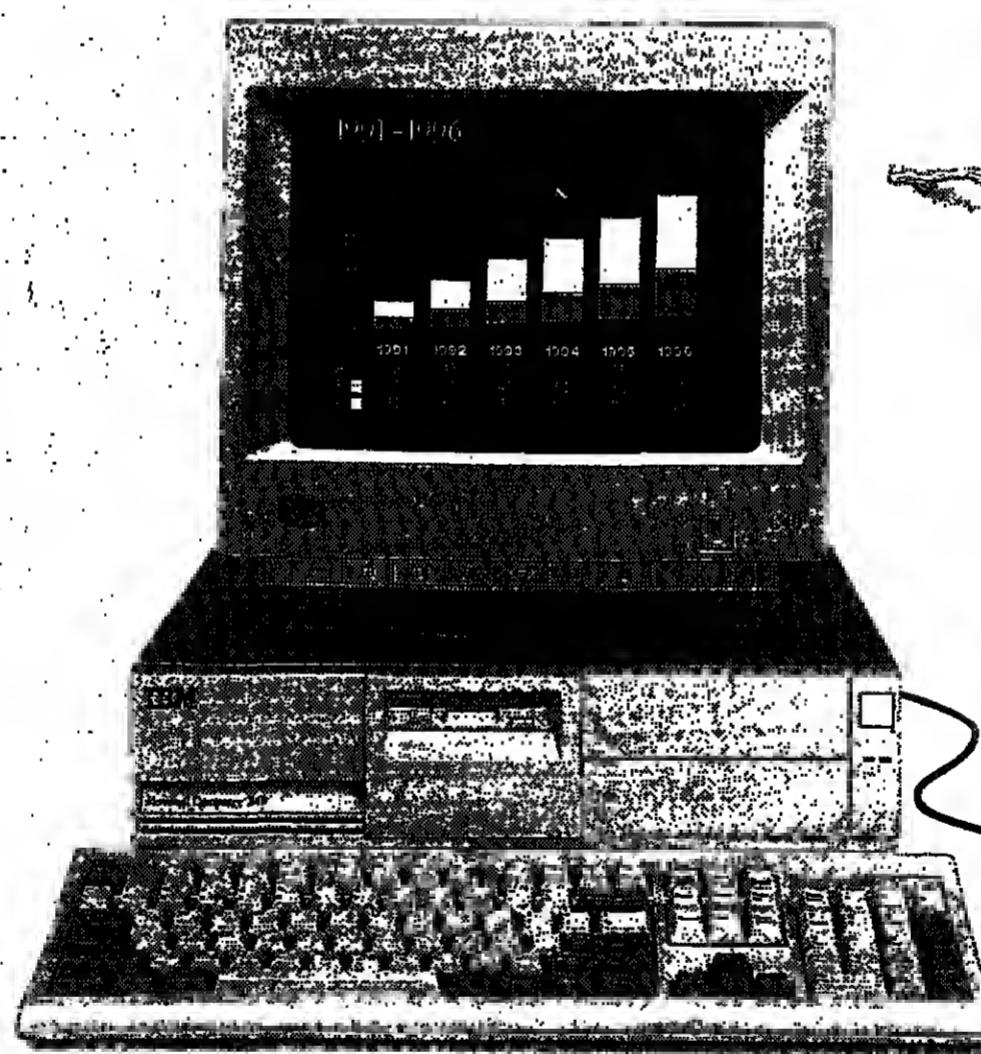
DAILY POEM**Epitaph on Himself**

By John Donne

*My fortune and my choice this custom break,
When we are speechless grown, to make stones speak.
Though no stone tell thee what I was, yet though
In my grave's inside sees what thou art now:
Yet thou art not yet so good, till death us lay
To ripe and mellow here, we are stubborn clay.
Parents make us earth, and souls dignify.
Us to be glass, here to grow gold we lie.
Whilst in our souls sin bred and pampered is,
Our souls become worm-eaten carcasses
So we ourselves miraculously destroy.
Here bodies with less miracle enjoy
Such privileges, enabled here to scale.
Heaven, when the trumpet's air shall them exhale.
Hear this, and mend thyself, and thou mend'st me,
By making me being dead, do good to thee,
And that me well composed, that I could now
A last sick note to syllables allow.*

John Donne was born in 1572 in Bread Street, London. He was a Catholic at a time when Catholics were terribly persecuted and lost his father at the age of four, circumstances which helped to set up complex psychological patterns within him. In adult life this complexity yielded his miraculous poetry although his friend, Ben Jonson, feared his verse would prove too difficult to survive. Poverty, secrecy, suicidal depression, a powerful drive for self-advancement and finally, when all other employment eluded him, entry at James I's behest into the Church, formed the threads of Donne's life. The most celebrated preacher of his day, but little known as a poet, he died in 1631.

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politics

Brown sees cracks in 'economic miracle'

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke was given a clear warning yesterday by Gordon Brown, his Labour shadow, that the rise in interest rates would curtail the room for tax cuts in his Budget.

Mr Brown said the rise in inflation would hit home owners and underlined the need for a prudent Budget on 26 November. He said it showed that the

cracks were already appearing in John Major's "economic miracle".

The Prime Minister clashed angrily with Tony Blair in the Commons, accusing the Labour leader of pursuing "grievance politics" as he drove home Labour's pre-Budget charge – repeated in a party political broadcast – that the voters would not trust the Tories on tax.

Mr Major told him: "What you cannot stomach is that the

British economy is in better shape than any Labour government has ever been able to put it." The Prime Minister said the rise in inflation from 2.1 per cent to 2.7 per cent was "a statistical aberration". But Mr Blair dismissed this as "ridiculous".

The rise in inflation reinforces a pre-Budget poster campaign by Labour attacking 22 tax increases since the 1992 general election. It is being backed up with a party political broad-

cast, modelled on a horror film. Calling for urgent action to tackle the lack of investment which was the underlying cause of price rises, Mr Brown said: "Two weeks ago, we had an interest rates rise. At the beginning of this week, mortgages started to rise again. Now we have the largest rise in inflation for six years."

"Within only two months of the Prime Minister declaring an economic miracle, the cracks

are already appearing, exposing the underlying economic weakness of the Tory economic record. It makes a mockery of the Prime Minister's claim to have conquered inflation."

Mr Brown said the interest rates rise two weeks ago was "necessary and inevitable", and it was now important to take action to deal with inflation. "We are demanding that we have a prudent and sensible Budget."

Committing Labour to re-

verse any move to abolish capital gains tax, Mr Brown said it would open the door to tax avoidance which would cost more than £3.5bn, estimated by the Treasury.

Ministers privately welcomed the upturn in the economy, in spite of the inflation, but feared the Chancellor will be forced to raise interest rates again, flattening the lift it is giving the Tories in the opinion polls.

Welcoming this week's 40,800

fall in the jobless figures, the Prime Minister told the House: "Unemployment here is falling in a way that cannot be seen anywhere else in the continent of Europe."

"I don't think that is unrelated to the fact that we have avoided the burdens on business that so many of our partners have accepted and that would have been accepted by Labour."

Mr Blair countered: "Today's inflation rise, together

with the sharp rise in long-term interest rates, should set the warning lights flashing." And he asked the Prime Minister: "How do you square it with your promise, made just a few months ago, that you would meet your inflation target by the end of this year?"

Mr Major retorted: "I know the retail price figures are complex to understand, but I think you have failed to understand the impact of the figures."

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS

SCORING THE EXCHANGES

John Major
5/10

Tony Blair
6/10

E-THEMES OF THE DAY

The economy (Sidney Chapman, C. Chipping Barnet; Tony Blair, Paddy Ashdown)

The Social Chapter (Hartley Booth, C. Finchley)

BSE (Peter Pike, Lab. Burnley)

The Crisis in Zaire (Andrew Rowe, C. Mid Kent)

BLAIR'S ATTACK

Blair chose to discuss the state of the economy focusing on "today's inflation rise, together with the sharp rise in long-term interest rates". Major responded to his questions with a mixture of comiseration for Blair's supposed inability to understand the statistics ("I will explain it to the Rt Hon Gentleman, so he can explain it to his backbenchers"), and emphasis of the good employment figures of Wednesday. Major may come to regret his explanation of the inflation rise ("a statistical aberration because of a dramatic fall last year").

GOOD DAY

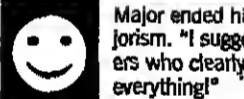


BAD DAY



PETER PIKE
(Lab. Burnley): skewering the Prime Minister over beef once again. Major said he had already answered the question several times on previous occasions. All he could offer was the prospect of continuing discussions with the European Commission.

THE QUIP OF THE DAY



Major ended his reply to Ashdown with a fine new Majorism. "I suggest he stops taking advice from his advisers who clearly know nothing... about everything!"

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION



Blair: "Will he now confirm that on interest rates and inflation Britain is now 11th out of 15 in Europe? Will he confirm it?" Major wouldn't, asserting once more that Blair "really doesn't understand". Blair gave him another chance in his third question: "If he disputes it, let him come to the dispatch box and say that figure is wrong". Major didn't.

THE CREEP OF THE DAY



Chapman: "Would my Rt Hon Friend accept that the latest monthly unemployment count... underlines yet again the success of the government's policies promoting job creation..." He went on for a long while in the same vein.

Compiled by Ben Summers

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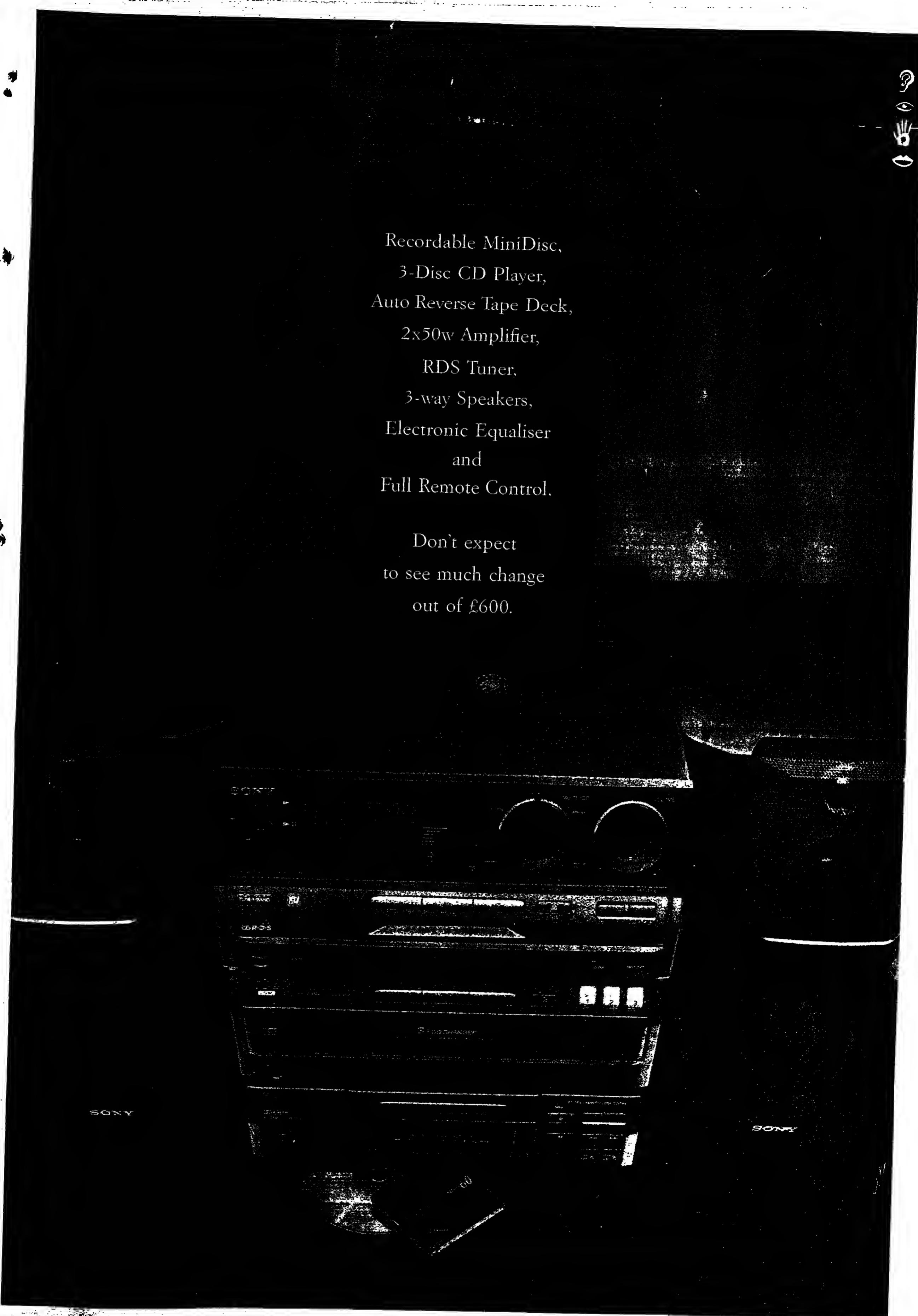
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international

China feels Thatcher's handbag

Teresa Poole

As she herself told her hosts, she was never "famous for remaining silent". In that respect, she remained true to form.

A speech by Baroness Thatcher in Peking yesterday was punctuated by just the sort of comments China does not expect to hear from visiting former world statesmen: "dismay at recent harsh sentences for dissidents, warnings to China not to block Internet access, a reference to Qin dynasty book-burning, and a prediction that economic reform was 'bound to lead in time to change in the way in which China is governed'".

In her familiar bright blue suit and pearls, she mused: "It is very interesting that the same Chinese people in mainland China ... produce a totally different standard of living" from that of Hong Kong. The answer, she added, was "the system of government under which you live". Visiting diplomats and business leaders do not display such forthrightness when speaking in China, fearful of losing contracts as a result.

The former British prime minister declared that British rule deserved the credit for Hong Kong's prosperity but that "the success of the transition is now in China's hands". She warned Chinese leaders that the return of Hong Kong would "have the most direct and immediate bearing on China's reputation in the world".

Lady Thatcher said she intends to be in Hong Kong on 30 June next year, when sovereignty reverts to China, "to witness the undertakings so solemnly given by China ... being put into practice".

It was, however, as one of the signatories to the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the return of Hong Kong that she wanted to make her point.



Big blue: Hostesses watching a telescript of Baroness Thatcher speaking at China's annual business summit in Peking

significant shorts

Burials begin of Indian air crash victims

Adila Fatima, four months old, was laid to rest as India began burying victims of history's worst mid-air collision, which killed 349. She was buried alongside mass graves for up to 100 people in a cemetery 50 miles from New Delhi. "We haven't found the bodies of her parents," her uncle said. Authorities have identified 131 of 294 bodies recovered after Tuesday's collision between a Saudi Boeing and a Kazakh freighter.

Reuter - Charkhiddar

Hour-old baby girl undergoes heart implant

Cheyenne Pyle, a one-hour-old girl born with a defective heart, was given a new one in a Miami hospital. Tests last month on Alberta Pyle, 27, showed the left side of her baby's heart was faulty. After doctors traced a heart from a baby dead at birth and flew it from another unnamed city, Cheyenne was delivered by Cesarean section; the heart operation began an hour later.

Phil Davison Miami

Reuter - Miami

Shots-to-kill warrants

Arrest warrants were served on East Germany's last hardline Communist leader, Egmont Krenz, and three deputies after a higher court said they could be jailed if convicted of manslaughter.

They have been on trial for the past year, charged with responsibility for deaths at the Berlin Wall and border between the former two Germanys. The Supreme Court allowed former East German leaders to be jailed for "shoot-to-kill" and removed an important line of defence Mr Krenz had been using in the trial.

Reuter - Rome

Italy's Mr Clean quits Cabinet

Antonio Di Pietro, who helped sink Italy's governing class over corruption,

resigned as Public Works Minister after coming under investigation himself over alleged irregularities in the way he conducted his inquiries.

It was not clear if his resignation had been accepted by the Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, who earlier expressed support for his minister, star of the Milan "Clean Hands" investigators until he quit in 1994.

Reuter - Rome

Latinos hit at Republicans

More evidence that 1996 was the year Republicans lost the Latino vote came with the fall of Robert Dornan,

conservative Orange County congressman. After a count of absentee ballots, Loretta Sanchez, a Democrat, led by a few hundred votes, boosted by Hispanic electors angered by the Republicans' anti-immigrant message.

Tim Cornwell - Los Angeles

Last service from Nastase

The ex-tennis star Ilie Nastase, who failed to become mayor of Bucharest in June and this month failed to become an MP, ended his foray into politics and resigned from Romania's ruling Party of Social Democracy. Adrian Bridge

Reuter - Bucharest

Kidnapper's finger of fate

Toru Odaima, alleged to have cut off his finger and mailed it to family members to fake his own kidnapping, was arrested after leaving a fingerprint on a form at a hospital where he sought treatment for the finger he cut from his left hand.

Reuter - Tokyo

Cult members surrender

Two members of the cult accused of last year's Tokyo subway gassing, which killed 12 people and injured thousands, gave themselves up. Reuter - Tokyo

Reuter - Tokyo

Peking threatens Tibet's radical monks

Peking (Reuter) — China will defrock radical monks in Tibet in a crackdown that could last up to five years in an attempt to uproot the influence of the Dalai Lama in his Himalayan homeland, a Chinese propaganda official said yesterday.

"Lamas who are comparatively reactionary will be told to return to secular life," the official said in Tibet's

capital, Lhasa. "Reorganisation of monasteries ... will consist mainly of ideological education ... It could continue for three to five years."

China has vowed to curb the influence of Buddhism and the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled god-king, in the region, saying religion must conform to socialism. "Religious culture ... not only hampers social development and

economic development, but also stops people becoming more civilised," the official *Tibet Daily* said yesterday. The newspaper has also complained that monks in Tibet outnumber students and more money was spent on monasteries than on Communist Party buildings.

"Monasteries will not be closed [but] work teams will enter and be sta-

tioned at monasteries," the propaganda official said.

For several months, China has been stationing "work teams" in Tibetan monasteries. The teams force monks into study sessions on becoming more "patriotic" and into signing pledges supporting Chinese authorities.

There were 1,787 temples in Tibet

by early 1996, with 46,000 monks and nuns, the *Tibet Daily* said. The newspaper complained that young Tibetans were entering the clergy and living off alms instead of working. China has shut many temples in Tibet in recent years. "The spiritual realm is the main battlefield of our struggle against the Dalai Lama clique," the newspaper said. It claims that some temples have become the headquarters of separatist forces.

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First Name:

Address:

Post Code:

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2. Personal Information

Marital Status: Single Divorced

Widowed Separated

Age: Height:

Occupation:

Religion:

Build: slight medium large

Attractiveness: Very attractive

Attractive Average

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3. Education

Private / Public

Comprehensive

Secondary Modern

O Levels / GCSEs

A levels

Further Education

University / Professional Equivalent

Technical Qualification

4. Your Personality

(tick which traits closely describe you)

Affectionate

Fashionable

Serious

Practical

Considerate

Conventional

Shy

Reliable

Romantic

Adventurous

5. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly)

Do you prefer town life?

Do you involve yourself with community activities?

Do you have many friends of your own sex?

Are you interested in current affairs?

Are you looking for one special relationship?

Do you like team activities?

Does your work make it difficult to meet new people?

Do you feel resentful when forced to act quickly?

Do you want to extend your social life as well as finding a special relationship?

Do you devote a lot of time to your social life?

6. Your interests

(sections 6. and 7. Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no prefe)

Wining Dining

Pubs

Sports Keep fit

Politics/History

Watching TV

Reading

Travelling

Science/Tech

Cinema

Pets/Animals

Pop music

Countryside

7. Details of the partner you would like:

Min. age: _____ Max. age: _____

Height: min. _____ max. _____

Don't mind

Marital status: Single Divorced

Widowed Separated

Don't mind

Build: slight medium large

Attractiveness: Very attractive

Attractive Average

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1.2

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0.8

0.6

0.4

Strikes scare off French bank sale

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

The French government has halted the privatisation of the banking group CIC in a decision that appears to have more to do with politics than economics.

With popular discontent running high over unemployment, state budgetary constraints and the Prime Minister personally, the government's priority is to avoid a resurgence of last year's near-revolutionary street protests.

The official reason given for calling off the privatisation was that only one serious offer had been received and that was considered too low. But the timing of the announcement – on the eve of a public-sector strike that is expected to halt most local transport – suggests that the economic argument was not uppermost.

The privatisation of CIC had encountered strong opposition from bank employees, and from politicians who predicted the end of regional banking in France.

The next few weeks will be a sensitive time for the French government, and for the Prime Minister, Alain Juppé.

It was a year ago today that he presented to Parliament his plan for a comprehensive reform of the welfare and public service pension system, precipitating a six-week movement of popular protest.

The period between now and Christmas will be punctuated by a series of anniversaries of last year's "glorious protests" and the ever-present risk of a recurrence.

This is not the first time in recent months that the government has shown extreme caution when confronted with any incipient protests that could assume national proportions.

Three weeks ago, a plan to restructure the state railway company was quietly shelved. A short announcement on the day the bill had been due for publication said only that it had been postponed.

The bill had been expected to set out a completely reworked and greatly diluted version of last year's planned reform of the railways. Even this, it seems, was considered too risky. The railwaymen, with their pension and job worries, had spearheaded last year's protests, shutting down the national network for four weeks.

The government is also smarting from the outcry that met its decision to sell off the state-owned electronics and communications company, Thomson.

The protest was threefold: That such a giant of the French state sector should be sold off at all; that a company which most French people thought was flourishing (even though it made huge losses) should be sold for the symbolic sum of one franc; and that the winning bid should include the further sale of a Thomson subsidiary – Thomson Multimedia – to a foreign company, Daewoo of South Korea.

The public relations fiasco of the Thomson sell-off, which unleashed all France's pent-up anxiety about jobs leaving the state sector, state assets going to foreigners and the state of France in general, is likely to have been a big factor in yesterday's decision to delay the sale of CIC.

Whether it will forestall job losses at the ailing bank or forestall a predicted shake-up in the precarious French banking sector generally, is another matter.

Like the retreat on the railways, the decision may only have been postponed until a less sensitive time of year. Stand by for the spring.



Lesson in power: Police grappling with a protesting student in Madrid yesterday during demonstrations against cuts in Spain's education budget. There were demonstrations across the nation

Photograph: Reuters

US will send troops to new Bosnia force

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

The United States confirmed yesterday that it would provide up to one-third of a follow-on Nato force in Bosnia.

The decision, which had been expected, sets the seal on a new force of some kind for Bosnia for the coming year. It came as the nations involved in Bosnia met in Paris to examine other aspects of the former Yugoslavia.

The new multinational follow-on force will replace the present 60,000-member Implementation Force (Ifor). Nato peacekeepers, including about

15,000 US troops, are set to pull out by the end of the year.

Nato's Secretary-General said in Washington that the overall force would come from about 30 countries and be as large as 30,000 troops. His "best guess", he said, is that there will be 6,000 to 10,000 Americans.

"I can't guarantee it, but that's my feeling," Javier Solana said, after meeting with US officials, including Vice President Al Gore.

The decision will create some continuity in Bosnia, underlined by the conference in Paris. It agreed that the authority and powers of Carl Bildt, the in-

ternational community's High Representative to Bosnia, are to be increased and the post will be maintained for a further two years to oversee the transition to civilian government and a durable peace in Bosnia.

France, as host of yesterday's Bosnia meeting, was concerned to keep official proceedings on course and set the guiding principles for the two-year "consolidation period" in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Among them is a 13-point set of priorities governing weapons control and reduction, the formation of a civilian police force, human rights guarantees, freedom of movement, the safe re-

turn of refugees and "full co-operation" with the International War Crimes tribunal.

While all participants stressed the progress since last year, Mr Bildt and international representatives expressed "concern" that insufficient progress had been made in important areas. They were particularly unhappy about the time being taken to form civil institutions in Bosnia, starting with a govern-

ment of national unity.

In yesterday's "guidelines", the Bosnian presidency pledged "as a high priority to establish all the joint institutions provided for in the Constitution and making them fully operational as

soon as possible." The guidelines also included pointed reminders that provision of aid could depend on implementation of the peace agreement.

"There is a link," they said, "between the availability of international financial assistance and the degree to which all the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina fully implement the peace agreement, including co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal."

As High Representative, Mr Bildt is to have his role "reinforced", so that he can chair all "key" meetings with agencies working on the ground. He will be acknowledged as the "final

authority" where there are conflicts in interpreting aspects of the peace accords relating to civilian matters.

He will also have the authority to make "recommendations" to the Bosnian authorities. His staff is also likely to be increased. Whether Mr Bildt's 12-month mandate will be extended has not yet been discussed, but it appears to be likely.

The meeting in Paris is to be followed by a conference in London in three weeks' time to consider how the principles agreed yesterday will be put into practice. It also agreed to hold municipal elections.

international

Industrialist's son held by Eta kidnappers

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

The recomposition of an Eta strike force.

The government has appealed for recipients not to yield to threatening letters but to tell the police, but many will be too frightened to do so. A businessman's leader said the kidnapping "worsened an already intolerable situation" by heightening the climate of fear and threatening to derail measures to bolster the region's flagging industrial activity.

Eta already holds hostage Jose Antonio Ortega Lara, a prison officer seized more than 10 months ago. Last April Eta released the businessman Jose Maria Aldaya, reportedly on payment of more than £500,000, after nearly a year.

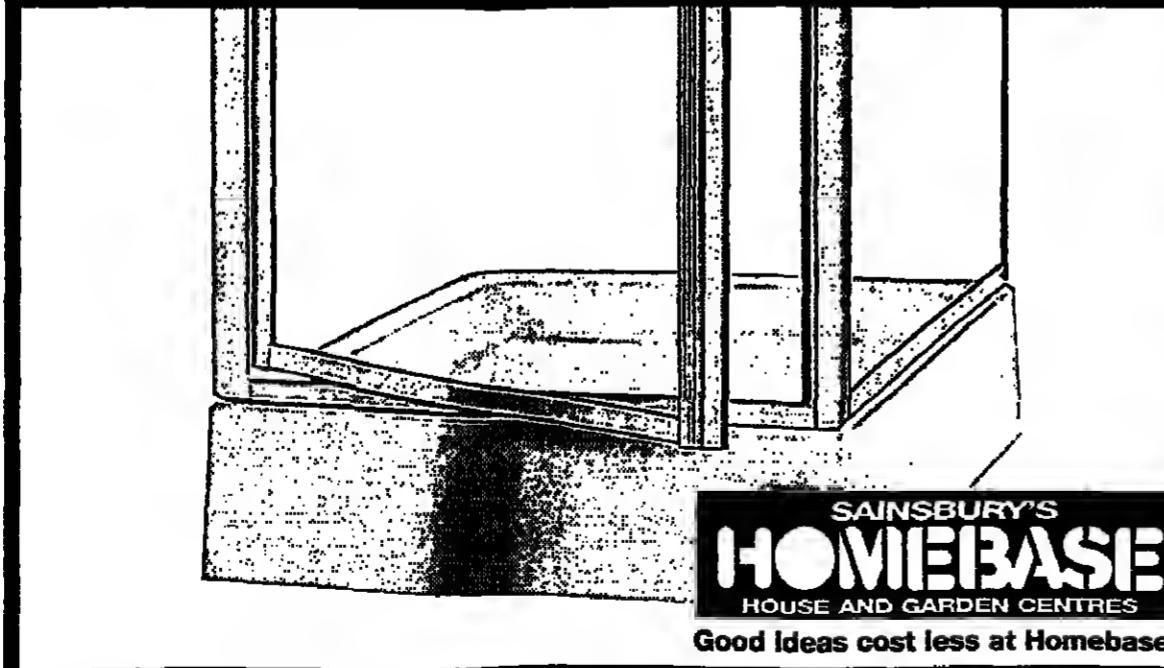
The latest action follows a renewed Eta campaign to extort "revolutionary taxes" from the region's industrialists.

Cosme Delclaux, 34, son of a prosperous glass-making family linked to a powerful Basque bank, disappeared last Monday in Las Arenas near Bilbao. His car was found near his workplace two days later. Police believe Eta will demand a huge ransom and use the crime to frighten other Basque entrepreneurs.

The Interior Minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, admitted the recent lull in Eta activity was no more than "a mirage". Police think the latest action indicates

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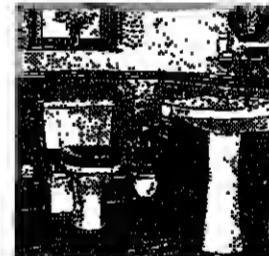
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٥٦٣ من الأصل

international

The night a Florida town burned

Phil Davison
Miami

At least five people were wounded by gunfire as the Florida retirement town of St Petersburg erupted in rioting overnight Wednesday-Thursday for the second time in three weeks.

Groups of black youths roamed the streets, burning buildings and shooting at white policemen and motorists, after a white policeman was cleared of blame for shooting a black youth on 24 October. Police responded with tear gas.

After the verdict was announced, black youths shot a 39-year-old white policeman in the leg. Another officer flying a he-

licopter was grazed by a bullet and three civilians were also wounded. Bullets were fired at four small helicopters hired by local television station cameras but none was reported hit.

The usually staid Gulf coast

town across the bay from Tampa – where blacks form 20 per cent of the 240,000 population – was stunned by the latest violence in a predominantly black district south of the town centre.

Although the rioting was less widespread than on 24 October, when 11 people were hurt and 28 buildings torched, it appeared to involve more shooting and less rock-throwing.

Police and city officials blamed a radical black group known as the National People's



Flashpoint: An armed police officer stands by as fire burns in a car lot during a night of disturbances in the Florida town of St Petersburg

Photograph: Reuters

St Petersburg's mayor, David Fischer, called early yesterday for tolerance but criticised Uhuru. Fearing that the riots may spread throughout Florida, governor Lawton Chiles said the state's National Guard was on alert.

Democratic Uhuru Movement, which had warned that "the town is going to burn" if a jury acquitted white officer James Knight of killing Tyron Lewis, 18, last month. The officer fired into Lewis's car after the youth refused to roll down his tinted

windows and allegedly edged the car forward towards the policeman.

Although the jury of 15 whites and one black ruled on Wednesday that the shooting was "justifiable homicide", a police investigation ruled that of-

ficer Knight should have treated instead of shooting. He was suspended without pay for two months.

A local equal rights activist, Perkins Shelton, said: "All the officer had to do was step aside. Instead, he shot and killed that

boy. That shows how valueless black people's lives are in this community." Truman Smith, who raised Lewis, said: "To kill my son and then clear the officer is unthinkable."

After the jury verdict, the Uhuru movement – apparently

named after the Swahili word for "freedom" – distributed leaflets calling for a "community meeting" at 6.30pm on Wednesday. "We will not be shot down in the streets like dogs," it said. "Get organised!" The shooting erupted around 6.30pm.

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Archbishop who inspired nation in life and death

Rupert Cormwell
Washington

It was the most public of dyings – yet somehow Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago, suffused his own with a dignity, serenity and faith that made the last months of his life a national inspiration.

"Heaven's a little better place today," said one parishioner from the city's ethnic West Side when he heard of his death.

The highest-ranking figure in the US Catholic church died early yesterday at his home after an 18-month bout of pancreatic cancer. He underwent surgery in June 1995, but after an initial remission announced in August that the disease had spread and had become inoperable. A fortnight ago, he gave up his duties in the archdiocese.

Even so, the Cardinal remained active until the end in the great moral debates of his day – including a patient's right to assisted suicide, an issue now taken up by the US Supreme Court and which he opposed vehemently. "I am at the end of my earthly life," he wrote to the Court on 7 November, "and I know from my own experience that patients face difficult and deeply personal decisions about their care ... but creating this new 'right' will endanger society and send a false signal that a less than 'perfect' life is not worth living."

The Archbishop died surrounded by his sister and friends, having received phone calls on the final day of his life from President Bill Clinton and the Pope, who thanked him "for everything he had done for the archdiocese of Chicago and

the universal Church," according to a Vatican spokesman.

During 14 years as a cardinal, representing the 2.3 million Catholics in Chicago, perhaps his most valuable service was as a builder of consensus and compromise on issues which set liberal US Catholics at odds with Rome – among them birth control, women priests and AIDS.

Moderate and quiet-spoken, the 68-year-old Cardinal commanded respect from all quarters of his church and beyond. Nothing, however, became him more than his handling of sexual molestation charges brought by former seminarian, Stephen Cook. Mr Cook, who died of AIDS last year, recounted his story and was publicly forgiven by the Cardinal. Despite his embarrassment, he was still and serene throughout the ordeal.

Cardinal Bernardin had come to terms with mortality. "We can look at death in two ways, as an enemy or a friend," he said in September. "As a person of faith, I see death as a friend."

Swiss to discuss Nazi gold loot

Louise Jury

The Swiss government has invited Greville Janner MP to discuss the Nazi gold affair in Berne next week.

Mr Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Education Trust and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, will demand an immediate contribution by the Swiss to Jewish charities working with Holocaust survivors as a "significant gesture to the victims of Nazism who are fast dying away". He will also press for speed and openness in investigating what happened to Nazi-looted wealth.

The meeting will be the first face-to-face opportunity for putting his case to Flavio Colai, the Swiss foreign secretary, Thomas Borer, who is heading the inquiry, and Swiss members of parliament. Mr Janner, with David Hunt MP who chairs the Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Anti-Semitism, also hopes to meet bankers.

Switzerland has been embarrassed by the storm of controversy which followed allegations that at the end of the Second World War it held on to gold which it knew could not have been obtained by Germany legally. In September, the Swiss

government bowed to worldwide pressure and announced plans to lift the secrecy surrounding its banking business to help the search for any such wealth left in its bank vaults.

Mr Janner said yesterday that next Monday's meeting was further evidence of movement in the Swiss position. "It is very significant," he said.

Robert Reich, attaché at the Swiss embassy in London, said yesterday: "The meeting is to enable Mr Janner to present his queries and current preoccupations concerning the whole matter. From our side, we want to outline to him once again what has been undertaken and done in Switzerland."

Jewish campaigners have been pressing for action on the former Nazi wealth. Lawyers acting for the World Jewish Congress last week called on Britain, France and the United States to delay distribution of £500m of Nazi-looted gold held in the Bank of England until its origin was established. It is due to be returned to countries from which it was plundered during occupation. Jewish organisations claim some of it came from private persons and efforts should be made to trace them or their families.

Fighting threatens to spread as Tutsis launch offensive and a border clash add to tensions in central Africa

Zaireans attack Uganda border crossing

MARY BRAID
Kampala

Tension in central Africa increased still further yesterday as Uganda accused Zaire of invading its territory.

More than 100 men attacked a Ugandan border post and five people - two civilians and three attackers - were killed in the incident at Npondwe, about 50 miles from the town of Kasese. Hundreds of villagers fled in panic.

Witnesses said some of the men had Zairean army uniforms but others wore torn, dirty civilian clothes.

It is one of the most serious border incidents between the two countries in recent weeks. Zaire has accused Uganda, as well as Rwanda and Burundi, of backing the rebels who in the past three weeks have swept through its eastern territory and taken control of north and south Kivu.

Zaire's claims that its neighbours have designs on its territory have heightened fears that the crisis in eastern Zaire might spiral into a wider conflict.

The area in which the attack took place has recently been flooded with Zairean refugees fleeing fighting further south on the Zaire-Rwanda border, around Goma. To escape the war between rebels and Zairean troops and the worst excesses of retreating Zairean soldiers, the refugees have been crossing into Uganda, travelling around Lake Edward and crossing back to Zaire via the Kazinga Channel further north in Kasese province.

There is speculation that the attackers are the desperate remnants

of Zairean army units which have also fled the fighting further south, or Zairean bandits taking advantage of the chaos. Shops were looted during the raid.

"We don't care if this was sanctioned by the Zairean government or not," a Ugandan government spokesman said yesterday. "The fact is that a breach of our sovereign territory and the taking of our people's lives by foreign aggressors. We have sent in reinforcements. And we are taking the attack very seriously." Representations had not

been made to the Zairean government because complaints about other border incidents had gone unheeded, he said.

Martin Aliker, Uganda's foreign minister, said the attackers appeared to consist of Zairean troops and Ugandan dissidents, trained in Zaire. He said the attack reflected the general lawlessness caused by the crisis in eastern Zaire. He denied that Uganda had supported the Zairean rebels.

The Ugandan government has

repeatedly warned that it will defend its border vigorously against any outside aggression. The decision by the international community to intervene in the crisis in eastern Zaire is partly motivated by a desire to ensure that it does not spread.

The cross-border attack came on the day that Major General Edward Smith of the US Army, who has been commander of the Southern European Task Force, flew into the Ugandan capital Kampala with a 40-strong team to assess arrangements for the international operation to rescue one million Rwandan Hutu refugees

trapped by the fighting in eastern Zaire. The operation is expected to start next week. The US assessment team yesterday moved on to the Rwandan capital Kigali.

Kampala seems set to become the nerve-centre of the operation and aid agencies were yesterday preparing for a massive airlift. However, the military forces must first secure Goma airport, which is held by the rebels. Entebbe, Kampala's airport, was at the centre of the 1994 relief operation aimed at the same refugees facing the same problems.

British military experts plan aid for 1m

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

British and US military planners have arrived in central Africa to work out what the international intervention force is to do to help the 1.2 million refugees roaming eastern Zaire, and how it will do it.

Last night, contributors said they planned to stay for only four months, to stabilise the situation and set up aid and evacuation routes, before handing over to a mainly African peace-keeping force.

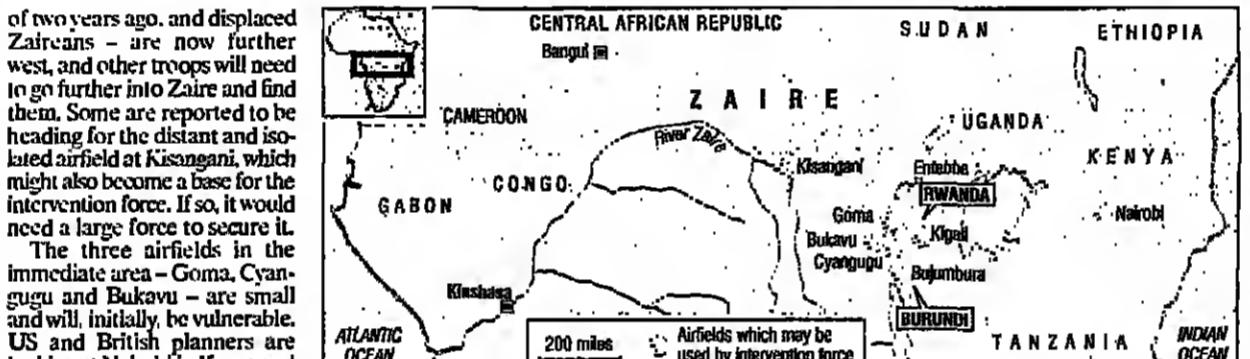
The exact objectives of the international force, which may be up to 15,000 strong, were being thrashed out in New York and at a foreign ministers' meeting in Paris, originally convened to discuss Bosnia. The force will operate under UN Charter Chapter Seven, giving it tough powers to engage local forces if necessary, although most of the western powers providing troops, including Britain, want to concentrate on helping refugees and delivering aid. But aid agencies yesterday said the force must have a mandate to disarm the Interahamwe Hutu militia and former Rwandan government army, which have been terrorising refugees.

"Without the mandate the force will only deal with the symptoms and not the cause of the tragedy," Oxfam said.

The US has said it will secure a three-mile corridor between the Rwanda-Zaire border and the refugee camp and airport at Goma, just inside Zaire. The corridor will enable aid to be brought in and, western planners hope, the Rwandan refugees to start returning home. But most of the refugees - Hutus who fled Rwanda and who fear returning because they believe they will suffer reprisals for the genocide



Touchdown: The chief US military planner Major-General Edwin P. Smith (centre, in beret) and staff arriving in Kigali yesterday. Photograph: Ap/APT/Pool



of two years ago, and displaced Zaireans - are now further west, and other troops will need to go further into Zaire and find them. Some are reported to be heading for the distant and isolated airfield at Kisangani, which might also become a base for the intervention force. If so, it would need a large force to secure it.

The three airfields in the immediate area - Goma, Cyangugu and Bukavu - are small and will initially be vulnerable. US and British planners are looking at Nairobi in Kenya and Entebbe in Uganda as major airfields where huge stocks of relief supplies and military equipment can be based and then flown the relatively short distances into Zaire.

The local militias do not have many heavy weapons and the

intervention force will need a large number of infantry with relatively light vehicles. They will also need many medical staff, logistics troops and engineers to restore or set up water supplies, repair bridges and

create an infrastructure which can sustain a vast population already dying from hunger, dehydration and disease.

Military sources yesterday said that Britain had been planning to send three battalions as part of a powerful force up to 3,500 strong, and Michael Portillo, Secretary of State for Defence, said the force would be based on a brigade of roughly that size. The headquarters of the British component is

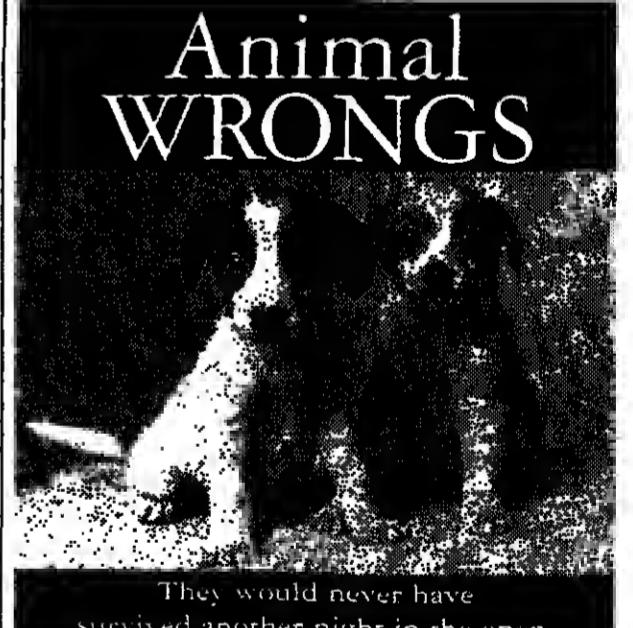
expected to be that of 5th Airborne Brigade, based in Aldershot, commanded by Brigadier Graeme Lamb, 43, The Chief of Operations of the Joint Rapid Deployment Force. Brigadier Jonathan Thomson of the Royal Marines, may be the senior British commander in the theatre. The Airborne brigade will control two infantry units, expected to be 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment and 45 Commando, Royal Marines, which were put on reduced notice to move yesterday.

The Paras exercise in Kenya annually, so they are familiar with the terrain and climate, but 45 Commando usually specialises in arctic warfare. They will also need a Logistic Regiment and medics.

Rwanda's Tutsis won power and stopped the killing. "This is a false start. As long as the international force is not prepared to disarm the ex-FAR [army troops] and the interahamwe, its objectives will not be achieved," Seth Karimanzanz, an adviser to the Rwandan president, said.

Mr McCurry said the US commitment to the force involved sending 1,000 ground troops to Zaire. An additional 2,000 to 3,000 American troops would go to nearby countries to help with support activities.

The world community is eager to avoid a re-run of 1994, when it ended up feeding many of those responsible for the slaughter in Rwanda. They then turned the camps into military bases for a possible comeback, infuriating the Tutsi-led governments of Rwanda and Burundi and sowing the seeds of the present crisis.



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obituaries / gazette

Tim Gidal

Tim Gidal was one of the founders of modern photo-journalism.

His first picture story, "The Vagabond Congress", was published by the *Münchner Illustrirte Presse*, a forerunner of *Picture Post*, in 1929, the year he entered the University of Munich in 1929 to read History.

He was born Nachum Gidalewitsch, in Munich, in 1909, of a Russian father and Lithuanian mother, and he came to photography through having empty pockets. Like many university students, he was hard up and when introduced to Paul Feinholz, the editor of the *Münchner Illustrirte*, he grabbed the opportunity to earn money.

Photo-journalism was invented in Germany as a result of Oskar Barnack's little Leica camera. This beautiful instrument, introduced by the Ernst Leitz optical company in 1924, enabled photographs to be taken under circumstances previously impossible with the large-format cameras popularly used by the press in the 1920s. The potential of the Leica, and its competitor the Ermanox, was grasped by those who, like Gidal, saw the new crop of illustrated magazines that were appearing in Germany as vehicles for their personal expression and as a livelihood.

Few of them were interested in photography for its own sake. The dozen of them all, the eminently discreet and respectable lawyer Adel Salomon used his Ermanox camera as a means of access to those with political power, and among other nascent photo-journalists contemporary with Gidal, only Kurt Hutton and Martin Munkacsi had received any formal training in photography. For Gidal, as for Felix Man, Umbro, Walter Bosshardt, Andre Kertesz, Wolfgang Weber and others, the camera was simply a means to an end.

In 1935, after six years in which he spent more time photographing than studying, Nachum Gidal was awarded his doctorate by the University of Basle, where he had removed himself in 1933 as a consequence of a growing Nazi pres-

ence within the university in Munich.

Gidal had been brought up in a religious family and had strong Zionist convictions from an early age. In Germany he had been active in the Blau Weiss Youth Movement, and a meeting with Chaim Weizmann in 1932 had convinced him that he should emigrate to Palestine at the first opportunity. Two months after the award of his doctorate, in May 1935, he went for a second time to Palestine and 12 months later settled permanently in Jerusalem.

For two years he struggled to make a living as a photo-journalist in a Palestinian Jewish community more interested in kibbutz propaganda pictures than honest documentary. Eventually, however, his luck turned and he sold a story on the conflict in the Holy Land to Stefan Lorant, the charismatic editor of the newly thriving magazine *Pioneer Post*. On the basis of this and an encouraging telegram from Lorant, Gidal moved to London.

In 1940, after two years in Britain, where he had over 40 picture stories published in *Pioneer Post* – which ranged from stories on the life of the unemployed to a day in a beauty school – he returned by sea to Palestine. This arduous trip round the Cape to Bombay, then to Suez and overland through Iraq to Jerusalem, produced many memorable photographs. But wartime Jerry屋 bored Gidal, and in 1942 he joined the Eighth Army

as a photographer. It was here that he acquired his sobriquet "Tim" from fellow officers during wartime service with the army's magazine *Parade*, a morale-boosting publication modelled on the successful German military picture magazine *Signal*. Together with Bola Zaja, another talented photographer, he produced for *Parade* a regular stream of photographs and stories. Given the honorary rank of Captain, Gidal was turned loose to cover North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East before being sent, in February 1944, to Mountbatten's headquarters in Burma.

Here he contracted typhus and was returned to Jerusalem, where he married Sonia Epstein, joined the Jewish Brigade, got bored again and was subsequently invalided out of the army in time to miss the Italian campaign and all that followed.

The problems facing post-war Palestine caused Gidal to think carefully about his future; should he continue as a photo-journalist or take up a more secure career as an academic. His training as an historian certainly inclined him towards an intellectual life, but it was the birth of his son, Peter, later to become a reputable art theorist and avant-garde film-maker in London and the United States, which decided the matter and in 1947 the family moved to New York, where Gidal eventually joined the staff of the prestigious New School for Social Research. He remained in the US until 1968, when he and his wife separated. He moved to Zurich and they divorced in 1970, after which he returned to live in Jerusalem.

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Watch out, Labour: the Tories could still win

Gallup here, MORI there: support for the Tories ratchets up with each successive poll.

By themselves the polls might not be causing consternation in the Labour Party. You do not have to be much of an arithmetician to work out that the rate of attrition of Labour's lead is going to have to rise if the Tories are to break through by the time an election has to be held next spring. But we all tend to ignore the small print: polling reports generally banish the don't knows or won't says to a footnote, even though together they equal or exceed Labour's lead. Besides, polls show opinion in a rear-view mirror. In a few weeks they are going to pick up what has been going on during the past few days - and when they do, they will make startling reading for anyone (the leadership of the Labour Party included) who has ruled the Tories out as election winners.

The change has been signalled recently by a loud noise - a sort of chunk-click. Two ends of a Tory political project came together. One is anti-Europe, neatly packaged in the European Court of Justice's decision on working hours. The other is economic competence, tagged yesterday by the latest unemployment figures, and bolstered by healthy signs on the housing and consumer confidence front. Put them together and it becomes plausible for the Conservatives to argue that

Britons should vote for the party which has a recipe for prosperity, and which will protect the ingredients from Luxembourg lawyers and their meddling like.

For a divided party it's a potent tonic. If Kenneth Clarke follows through with a prudent budget that does not charge off down the tax-cutting road, but instead chooses to emphasise sensible long-term economic management in everyone's interest, then the Tory claim to confidence and competence could become a powerful electoral mix, even in the very few months remaining. Cool Britannia, indeed. No wonder Tory tails are up.

It bears repeating: the key to election success is the perception of economic competence. The Tory plot is a neat one; first, to imply that our recent economic gains (relative to the rest of Europe) are a consequence of running a deregulated, liberalised market economy; and secondly that, in turn, the imposition of a 48-hour week is an obstruction to that economic success. Vote Labour, John Major will argue, and you will see our economic advantage sliced off at the neck by Eurocrats determined to level our economy down.

It is a neat plot, and it may yet work. But it is only one plot. Labour's trouble of late is that Mr Blair and his strategic team seem to be sunk in the torpor of their long-standing opinion-poll lead. Some shadow ministers have taken to

swanning around the political circuit as if they were merely killing time until the ministerial Rover draws up before their front door. Labour has turned itself into the passive party, sitting back while the unpopularity of the Tories does it for them - all the while striving to keep their noses clean and their feet clear of the potholes. All this is unimpressive, yes, but rational if the attitude surveys continue to suggest that this is still basically an election for the Tories to lose. But now the Tories have, for the first time in many, many months, a convincing battle plan that will also provide something of a for-

a permanent duty to redress the inevitable imbalance between employer and employee, and that treating staff fairly is a positive attribute of economic modernism. But you do not need theoretical refinement to say - as even President Clinton can say - that the little person sometimes needs protection, in the form of minimum wages (a hot ticket for the Democrats) or state-regulated maximum hours.

Labour at present lacks the confidence to pitch for positive appeal. Its appeal (as yesterday) is essentially negative: "Enough is enough" is not a campaign slogan, it's an admission that Labour has nothing enterprising to say. Somehow, and soon, Labour has to reclaim the campaigning agenda - detach the issue from Europe, and repatriate it as one of domestic fair shares.

Public opinion is not fixed, and on jobs it might well respond to some rough wooing. The British people have not converted *en bloc* to neo-liberalism. There is plenty of evidence that public attitudes towards work and the labour market have survived the Tory era and the decline of the trade unions pretty much unchanged. Tony Blair has surely known all along that the election was going to be harder fought than the polls suggested, that the Tories were out, for all the talk of death wishes and the genuine evidence there is of their power fatigue, going to hand him the contest.

He and his henchfolk need to wake up, and fast, to the fact that the Tories are starting to roll. If Labour wants to win, it cannot let the argument slip across to the 'Tory agenda', as it has steadily been doing these past few weeks.

He started so he'll finish

So farewell then. Britain's favourite lexicander, *Masternind*, succeeded in netting a wide spread of contestants. Teachers and civil servants were always over-represented, true, but it roped in the occasional taxi driver and blue collar worker who had left school early, but kept on learning. Perhaps like, everything else, *Masternind*'s ultimate demise lay in the recipe for its success - mixing general knowledge with esoteric specialisation. In the end, anoraks had no need for an excuse to be boring. *Masternind* was at its best when you had at least a chance of following the special subject - or the unpredictability of a specialist in Marilyn Monroe, or the sex life of ladybirds, just to keep our interest.

One question though. How much will that chair be worth in a decade's time? ... Pass.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Families hit by ever-longer hours of work

Sir: John Major is so wrong concerning the working week ("Tory plan to sabotage EU deal on hours and holidays", 12 November). In my professional life I come across many people (usually men) who are being pressured by employers to work longer and longer hours.

The pressure can vary at times. Employers can hint that others are willing to this, or that promotional prospects may be less if extra work is not taken, or even that should redundancy come around, those less willing to work longer hours would be the first to go.

The result is that many people are under pressure to work tremendously long hours, often including a Saturday and often having to bring work home on a Sunday. The damage done to families is incalculable.

There are other families where the wage-earner is either unemployed or in a very low-paid job. Here the family is under serious financial pressure.

The Tory party claims to be the party of the family, yet its refusal to accept the Social Chapter, with limits on the working week and a minimum wage, doing serious damage to our nation's families. The Rev MIKE BOSSINGHAM, Maidenhead, Berkshire

Sir: The assertion that there is medical evidence which indicates that long working hours lead to ill health seems to me misguided. I would challenge the experts quoted ("Long days can damage your health, say scientists", 13 November) to produce this evidence, if it exists. Junior doctors have recently had reduced hours, but has their health improved?

There is a widespread feeling around that "stress", which many of us feel we understand but few of us could define, causes illness. But this is a supposition, not a fact. Where is the evidence that long hours of work cause gastro-intestinal problems, as your article implied?

If I were to contend that "stress" is actually good for you if it leads to a sense of achievement, there are no scientists who could prove me wrong. What matters is the nature of work, not its duration.

PAUL KELLY,
Digestive Disease Research Centre,
St Bartholomew's, and the Royal
London School of Medicine and
Dentistry, London E1

Sir: The members of the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Court of Justice must be increasingly frustrated by the behaviour of the United Kingdom government. How can we assure them that the views of John Major and his cabinet are not the views of a large percentage of the UK population?

Most ordinary British people desire the implementation of the Social Chapter, want a minimum wage and applaud the decision of the court about working hours and paid holidays. They long for greater European integration; the strength of a single currency and the opportunities that the European Union offers to us all.

Many of us are embarrassed by the UK government's lack of action on BSE and their response to the generous financial aid offered by our European neighbours. We



need Brussels and Strasbourg to fight the Westminster government on our behalf. Many of us consider ourselves to be Europeans first and British second; our greatest fear is of losing our European citizenship, which would be a disaster for our country but a personal tragedy for us as individuals.

We need help and protection from a government that is

diktatorial, unrepresentative and acts on behalf of a small economic élite by oppressing the majority of UK citizens. We should be grateful for the European Union's continuing support and can only hope that our partners' patience does not run out.

PAUL MILLER,
European Citizen
Bristol

Sir: I never thought that Great Britain would allow itself to be taken over. I always trusted our politicians to protect us, but suddenly we discover that European law is now the supreme law of this land. That is why this week John Major, once again, has been sent packing - and always will be.

We were promised no loss of national sovereignty when we were urged to stay in the Common Market in the 1975 referendum. We have been terribly deceived and the deceit goes on. British sovereignty belongs to the British people - not to the politicians. It is up to us to say "yes" or "no" to the supremacy of Brussels over our nation; to unelectable bureaucrats forcing irreversible laws on us.

CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON,
ZAWADSKI

Sir: The Parliamentary Candidate, The Referendum Party, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Sir: On the day the Government makes its brave stand against the EU's directive on working hours, you carry reports of 250 million children at work throughout the world (12 November). I hope John Major will be equally forceful in his support for other countries' right to maintain their hard-won competitive edge.

JOHN CARY,
Birmingham

Malaysia shares E Timor blame

Sir: Your report on the vicious break-up of the East Timor conference in Kuala Lumpur (11 November) raises important questions about Malaysia's role in the East Timor tragedy. It is one thing for Malaysia, as Indonesia's neighbour and close regional partner within the Association of South East Asian Nations to show solidarity with Jakarta on this issue, quite another to provide gratuitous additional assistance.

Take the case of the East Timorese academic Mr Helder da Costa, one of the participants in the Kuala Lumpur event, who is currently enrolled in a degree course in Adelaide, South Australia. As the holder of a valid re-entry visa for Australia and someone with temporary residency rights in Australia (where he went to escape Indonesian oppression in East Timor), he should have been

allowed to return there when Malaysia began to deport the foreign conference participants earlier this week. Instead, he was returned, against his will, to Jakarta, where he was promptly arrested and taken into temporary custody by the Indonesian authorities.

With Malaysia's Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, accusing the West of double standards over human rights issues, particularly with regard to Bosnia, Kuala Lumpur's own record may now be in for long-overdue assessment. Where better to start than last Saturday's brutally aborted East Timor conference?

DR PETER CAREY,
Fellow & Tutor in Modern History
Trinity College
Oxford

Wartime light on air crash

Sir: You reported (9 November) Pierre Salinger's claim that TWA 800 might have suffered from "friendly fire". The favoured alternative seems to be a "mechanical" failure - actually an electrochemical explosion in a fuel tank.

In 1943 I was the (ground) engineer to No 241 Squadron, Hurricane bombers, in North Africa. In successive weeks, the aircraft of a flight commander and of his successor were seen to explode in mid-air whilst dive-

bombing enemy positions. In each case, the "No 2" behind them reported no sign of enemy fire.

To restore confidence, and especially the morale of the new, third flight commander, we carried out comprehensive checks on all the aircraft, such as testing the venting of fuel tanks, possible fuel spillages within the wings and fuselage, the earthing of the electrical system and especially the fuel contents sensors. Nothing was found amiss.

At the end of the campaign, when the enemy had been captured or driven out of Tunisia, the sites of both crashed aircraft were available to be visited; and they were carefully inspected. It was at once seen that each aircraft had suffered an anti-aircraft shell burst directly below the centre of the fuselage. Such a burst would not have been seen by the "No 2".

For TWA 800, our reported investigators as saying "that, with 95 per cent of the plane recovered, there was no place in the fuselage ... through which a missile might have travelled". I was at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough in 1954, working on anti-aircraft missiles, when the remains of the Comet salvaged from the Mediterranean were being examined. I am somewhat sceptical of the positive certainty of that statement.

AIR MARSHAL Sir REGINALD EW HANRARD,
Burgh St Edmunds,
Suffolk

Noisy toys in the garden

Sir: My observatiooo is that tidy-minded gardeners ("How does your garden grow?", 13 November) is largely a male phenomenon and can be explained as an extension of housework for neurotic men too chauvinistic to lend a hand around the home.

Ann Treneman doesn't mention, however, that the worst aspect of this silliness is noise pollution: a fast-growing breed of under-occupied males is rapidly destroying every scrap of peace and quiet in their own non-working hours. If we are to allow these idle creatures to play with their noisy toys, we should at least make it clear to them that it is their inadequacies that are being tolerated, and not their virtues admired.

ANGELA PARTINGTON,
Appleton, Oxfordshire

Interpreting art

Sir: Andrew Graham-Dixon ("Spreading the Word", 12 November) is "disconcerted" that the Tate offers its audience video tapes about the artists taking part in this year's Turner Prize - because he considers that the tapes reduce the experience of the work by providing interpretations.

In his article, he gets nn with the job he is paid for as an art critic - providing interpretations. Are we to take it that some interpretations are less reducive than others?

CHRISTOPHER SPENCER,
Director of Turner Prize video tapes
for Channel Four
London WC1

Time to break the silence

Sir: I feel uneasy about a permanent two-minute silence on Armistice Day. The First World War ended nearly 80 years ago, the Second over 50 years. The British Legion continues to do an excellent job in caring for survivors, but naturally the numbers must be declining.

Does there not come a time, as there has with many previous wars, when it is no longer appropriate to remember the dead and injured in every public way? By all means let us continue to have Poppy Day so long as there are veterans of any conflict to support. It is probably also right to "ring the bell" on an official Day of Remembrance to which people, either in church or elsewhere, can voluntarily go.

But the time has come when the two-minute silence must be put behind us, certainly as something that politicians, the media and business feel frightened of saying "no" to. True remembrance must come from the heart and head. JAMES SEYMOUR, Harrow, Middlesex

Supermarkets in a metric muddle

Sir: Stephen R Ridge (letter, November 13) claims that I have confused metrication with unit pricing. I have not. His claim that all pre-packed goods have to be sold in metric measures is a moot point.

The law requires that metric units be used as the primary size indicator. This, to me, is not the same as selling metric packs. The original draft legislation in last October's changes gave prescribed quantities for ground coffee of multiples of 250g only, and for milk (apart from returnable bottles), multiples of 300ml and 250ml.

However, by the time the law entered the statute books, these requirements had been watered down to permit the continued existence of non-metric sizes, as long as the metric equivalent came first on the label. Hence consumers are faced with packs which look similar, but which vary by 10 per cent in size. Unit-pricing on a tiny shelf-edge label is not an adequate remedy for this confusion, especially for the elderly or visually impaired. CHRIS KEENAN, Liverpool

Do you read me?

Sir: I can assure Sue Wheat ("Nightmare of getting to do an 'e'", 12 November) that it is not "easy enough to plug your laptop into the [hotel] room's telephone line".

That I have risked a hernia to move a heavy bed a foot from the wall to get to the hidden BT socket to send you this letter is by no means the only nightmare one encounters in using e-mail from hotel bedrooms.

It was impossible last week in Venice, because my US jack would not fit the Italian telephone socket. It worked in Dublin a week earlier, but then I moved to the west coast, where the connectors changed as fast as the weather.

I'm only able to send this because I bought an adaptor in London this week, where I learned from the supplier that there are at least 40 different types of telephone plugs worldwide, with nine varieties within the EU. It's the hardware that's hard; the software is (comparatively) easy. MICHAEL McLOUGHLION, London SW1

analysis

£20bn has been wasted. People have died. Yet the ministry to blame is still a slave to the farming business. Only when secrecy ends will consumers come first, says Andrew Pudephatt

Maurice Callaghan, 30, died from a new variant of the brain disease CJD last November. Just three weeks ago, John Lecky, the Belfast coroner considering the case, gave his verdict. He agreed with experts' views that Callaghan's death was linked to exposure to BSE – and his words confirmed the worst fears of public health experts.

The BSE crisis shows no signs of abating, and some specialists fear that deaths could increase significantly in years to come given BSE's incubation period.

We might well wonder where the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (Maff) has been in this period and how vigorous it has been in defending the interests of the consumer. Unfortunately for us, the answer is nowhere.

After all, this is the ministry that, while the Department of Health was working on a plan to reduce fat intake in the population, sponsored a Fish and Chip Shop of the Year competition. The problem is that the ministry aims to "improve the economic performance of the

agricultural, fishing and food industries". Caught between a powerful food producers' lobby on one hand and the Treasury on the other, consumers have never featured as a high priority. The links between BSE and CJD have long been suspected – and long been covered up. At every stage Maff dragged its feet – refusing for two years to make BSE a notifiable disease, and only ordering the banning of offal from the food chain three years after BSE's discovery.

Nor were the European Commission officials, who should have been a backstop, much better. The commission's top agricultural bureaucrat, Guy Legras, who heads the agriculture department, wrote to other civil servants working on BSE in 1993. He warned that "all discussions on BSE inevitably cause problems in the beef market" and suggested that "in order to keep the public at ease it is essential not to provoke a re-opening of the debate. If you can help me, we need to be prudent and avoid the discussion getting into the scientific committees."

Even earlier than this, in 1990, a standing veterinary committee within the Brussels Commission argued that it was "necessary to minimise the BSE affair by using disinformation".

Back in Britain even the Department of Health failed to make the health of the public its first priority. In the late 1980s, the Public Health Laboratory Service, funded by and accountable to the Secretary of State for Health, wanted to investigate a possible link between BSE and CJD. The Department of Health refused to allow this research to take place, since a link had not been conclusively proven. The scientist Harash Narang alleges that documents in his possession show that the Department of Health told the Public Health Laboratory Service not to investigate the new form of CJD.

If the families of those who have died from CJD do take their cases to court, it could reveal substantial disclosures of documentary proof showing the extent of the cover-up in Britain. This refusal to face the prospect of a potential link between BSE and CJD is perhaps the only explanation for the extraordinary comment made by Dr Stephen Dorrell in March when he announced the

possibility of a link. He added: "There is no contingency plan in place."

Suspicion of a cover-up and the Government's handling of the subsequent developments have led to a collapse in public confidence. The Rowntree Reform Trust State of the Nation poll conducted in September found that three out of four people did not trust Government ministers, or their advisory committees, to tell the truth about the safety of British beef. And a Consumers' Association survey published in June found that more than 70 per cent of people thought that the Government had withheld information about the risks associated with BSE. More than two-thirds of people questioned for

the association believed that the influence of food producers had resulted in a policy that was against our interests as consumers. The Government was trusted less than any other source, including the food industry, to give impartial advice.

What started as a health crisis has become a crisis of government – and it's a crisis which illustrates a wider problem: that of government policy making.

Government ministers cannot be expected to have a detailed grasp of policy. They rely on their civil servants, who in turn seek outside advice when generating policy briefs for their departments. But while business and professional groups have frequently been consulted, consumers and users of services

rarely figure. In the case of the food industry, this has meant Maff and NFU domination of post-war agricultural policy to the exclusion of consumer groups, environmentalists or wider taxpayer interests.

T his closed policy network contributed to the gap between the discovery of BSE in British herds in 1986 and the admission of the link between CJD and BSE 10 years later.

And why should we expect a more critical perspective to be provided by advisory quangos such as Seac (the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee), formed to provide much needed and supposedly

intelligent scientific advice on BSE? As Democratic Audit (the unit which monitors the workings of our democracy from its base at Essex University) has shown, most advisory quangos are secretive and unaccountable. We are told only what they choose to tell us. We have no right to know.

It is this secret, enclosed world of policy making that is ultimately to blame for the BSE crisis. Committees meeting in private and not subject to outside scrutiny develop a cosy, consensual approach to their work. Dissidents find themselves excluded from the committees, their work derided, their access to research funds blocked, and – sometimes – even their sanity questioned.

Scientists who did not accept the Maff line that BSE could not jump species – including Professor Richard Lacey, Professor Bernard Tomlinson and Dr Harash Narang – were not considered to be suitable members of Seac. And as a result, the growing evidence of the danger of BSE transmission to humans was ignored.

But even as concern about the threat to public health grew, the twin priorities of the interest groups concerned – protecting farming and limiting public spending – meant that policy makers, civil servants and even ministers were willing to manipulate evidence and mislead the public.

People's lives were put at risk to try to protect one of the most powerful lobby groups in the country – the farming industry. The consequence has been a disaster, not just for public health and the taxpayer, but for the farming industry itself. Bans on British beef have cost us more than £500 million in exports, and an estimated 6,000 jobs. Some economists estimate an increase to the public-sector borrowing requirement of £20 billion. It is not enough to find individuals or institutions to blame.

If we are to avoid future problems on a similar scale, we must end the secretive nature of policy making in this country. Government departments should be forced to publish lists of those they consult on policy issues – and those lists must include consumer interests. All advisory quangos should be placed on a proper statutory footing, be open in their dealings, publish their advice and give us access to their discussions. Our parliamentary process can't escape either. Select Committees in the House of Commons should be strengthened and given tougher powers to investigate the work of government departments. Our MPs need the power to scrutinise legislation and take expert evidence in public – from whoever they choose – on bills before the House.

And finally we need a freedom of information act, to give us all the right to know. Information held by official bodies in a democracy should be the property of the people. It belongs to us, not a political élite. If you pick up a can of steak and kidney pudding in the supermarket today you can find out how much fat it contains. You can see how many calories it provides, and even how much meat is in it. But you can't know whether or not it is safe to eat. And that just isn't good enough.

The writer is director of Charter 88, the campaign for a fair and modern democracy. The issues in this article are to be discussed at a major conference, "BSE: a sickness of government?", to be held at Regent's College Conference Centre, Inner Circle, London, NW1 4NS on 18 November. For information phone Charter 88 on 0171-278 9188. Tickets are £20 or £10 for concessions.

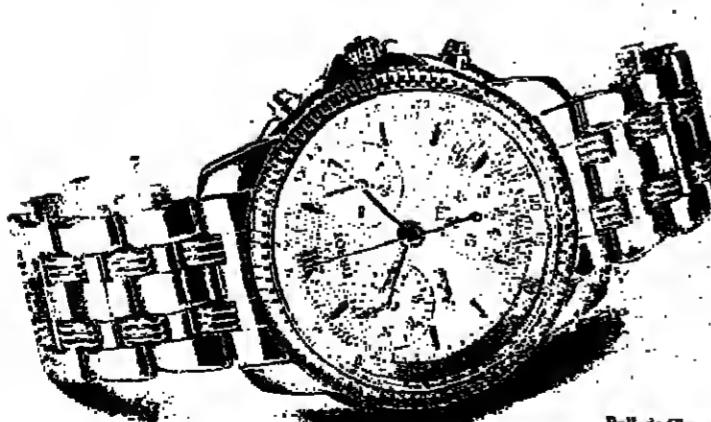


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Angry young John shows Santer his claws



Miles Kington

T oday we bring you a brand new seasonal Christmas story!

Once upon a time, there was a little boy called John, who was going down the street one day when he looked in a window of a big shop called Euro Mart and saw a sign saying, "Open today – Santer's Grotto!"

John looked in his pockets to see how much money he had got left. Gosh! It wasn't very much! In fact, it was hardly anything.

This was because he had already lent some money to Santer. He sat on

his friend Stephen for some medicine. He had also lent some money to his friend Michael Howard, who needed some more construction kit for a fortress he was building. He had also lent some money to his other friend Michael, who was No 2 in their gang, and who hadn't said what it was for.

No wonder he had no money left.

Not downhearted, though, he went into Santer's Grotto and queued up behind all the other boys in the queue, most of whom seemed to be French and German and Italians, and seemed to be getting a lot of jolly nice presents from Santer.

"What did Santer give you?" he said to a French boy who was just coming out, but the French boy pretended not to understand and went on talking to his German playmates.

John felt a bit left out in the cold.

It's a shame, isn't it, children, when we have no friends to talk to? Perhaps, like John, we must try harder to make friends.

Finally, it was John's turn to talk to Santer. He sat on

his knee and looked up into his knowing eyes.

"Well, John, and what do we want for Christmas?"

John was about to tell Santer what he wanted when he happened to glance out of the window. His face changed from a nice face to a nasty face.

"Never mind about that," said John. "I won't accept anything from you at all unless you behave yourself!"

"Good heavens," said Santer. "What a cross little child you are. Never mind – we all get a bit over-excited at this time of year. Did you remember to write a letter to Santa this year?"

"Yes, I did," said John.

"And what did the letter say?" asked Santer gravely.

"I'll tell you," said John, pulling out a copy and putting on his spectacles. "It says, 'Dear Santa, This is just to warn you that if you don't give me what me and my friends want for Christmas, I'm jolly well going to make sure that nobody else gets what they want and I'm going to make things very difficult for you and obstruct your reindeers and everything, and make sure you don't have

time to go round the world on Christmas Eve, and ...'

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JF 11/16/1996

the commentators

World's cheapest international phone calls



Hamish McRae

I imagine a world where you don't need to think of the price of a phone call, wherever the person you are calling happens to be. That freedom happens already on the Internet, but imagine that it will extend to ordinary voice traffic too. Friends in America? Relations in New Zealand? Pick up the phone. There is a revolution in international phone traffic coming and it is coming to Britain first.

Did you know that already more international telephone calls are made from London than from any other city on earth? In a way this is unsurprising. London is, by most measures, the world's largest international financial centre and it is the most important international hub for the world's airlines, so why not phone calls too? But it is important because it is the base from which the country is making one of those big strategic pitches for global business, a pitch to round the world's international telecommunications business through the UK.

From the end of this year any company that wants to run international calls in and out of the UK will be allowed to do so. Nearly 50 have applied and it seems most, maybe all, will get licences. Britain is the first country in the world to do this, to open its entire international phone traffic to anyone who wants to provide the service. These companies can put in their own kit, lay their fibre-optic cables, build their exchanges ("switches" in the jargon of the trade), and sell their services to whoever they want. The resulting competition will be a collapse of international call charges. Do not expect that to happen immediately, but over two or three years we will move to a position where it will cost very little more to call California than Canterbury. All the present devices that exist to get round high international charges, like Internet telephony and call-back systems, will no longer be needed. Indeed the voice telephone network will become like the Internet, a seamless global system.

We can, as a country, try to gain this advantage because for the time being physical location still matters in telecommunications. A generation ago a telephone exchange was the size of an office block; now you can fit a desktop-sized one on the back of a lorry. Maybe in another 10 years' time, when switches are the size of suitcases, the way calls are routed won't matter. But by then, according to the consultancy Analysys, we will have exploited the first mover advantage: a vicious circle, where, because most traffic is routed through the UK, more and more comes here. True, the present duopoly - BT and Cable & Wireless - will find themselves squeezed, but the prize of getting in first, and therefore achieving sufficient critical mass to be unassimilable, is deemed to be worth it. It is the telecoms equivalent of the City's Big Bang 10 years ago: we open up to everyone and thereby gain international market share, but at the expense of loss of local control.

So this is big in business terms for the UK.

Britain will benefit from being the switching centre for the world's telephone services

the entry barrier to exporting any phone-based service - be it advice, entertainment, information, shopping or any other interactive gimmick that entrepreneurs of the future can dream up. Enter the niche global player.

Three: expect a boom in international free-phone numbers. In America close to half the voice calls are now to free-phone numbers as businesses use this to sell and distribute their products, seamlessly across the nation. The same thing is going to happen to commerce internationally. A business will simply have one number for customers to ring from anywhere in the world. It will be free to the customers and very cheap to the business. Result: a further globalisation of business.

Four: the English language will gain further ground, as a result of the previous point. Ring a Swedish company and if you get the voice mail rather than the person the message will be in English as well as Swedish. The more business takes place over the international phone lines, the more the dominant language of business will dominate. Of course English is an open standard - anyone can use it - but this should be some advantage to Anglophone countries.

Finally, expect this particular bit of deregulation to be seen, in 20 years' time, as the most important single economic decision this Government has made. We are gaining a central role in creating the high-tech infrastructure for the next century. People rightly criticise UK infrastructure. But the world's new infrastructure is not roads and airports, certainly not railways. It is telecommunications. In a world where manufacturing (and increasingly service) technology crosses national boundaries in a matter of weeks, achieving a comparative advantage in international telecommunications is the most important thing any government can do.

But the phenomenon of very cheap international phone calls also matters enormously for the rest of the world. The fact that we will be able to call family abroad for little more than the price of a local call is one of the least important changes - nice but not something which will change the face of the earth. Here are five other, bigger consequences.

One: any telephone-based service - such as banking, data processing, electronic publishing - can be located anywhere in the world where the human capital exists to carry it out. So countries, regions or cities that have lots of clever, well-educated people will be able to exploit this resource even if their physical location has worked against them in the past. Being on the fringe will no longer matter; expect, for example, north/south differences in the UK to narrow, with wealth determined by who you are, not where you are.

Two: expect small companies to prosper at the expense of large. True, there are enormous forces for agglomeration in the telecom industry itself, witness the planned merger of BT and MCI, but for users of the service, very cheap calls help the small. The lower the cost of an international phone call, the lower the entry barrier to exporting any phone-based service - be it advice, entertainment, information, shopping or any other interactive gimmick that entrepreneurs of the future can dream up. Enter the niche global player.

Three: expect a boom in international free-phone numbers. In America close to half the voice calls are now to free-phone numbers as businesses use this to sell and distribute their products, seamlessly across the nation. The same thing is going to happen to commerce internationally. A business will simply have one number for customers to ring from anywhere in the world. It will be free to the customers and very cheap to the business. Result: a further globalisation of business.

Four: the English language will gain further ground, as a result of the previous point. Ring a Swedish company and if you get the voice mail rather than the person the message will be in English as well as Swedish. The more business takes place over the international phone lines, the more the dominant language of business will dominate. Of course English is an open standard - anyone can use it - but this should be some advantage to Anglophone countries.

Finally, expect this particular bit of deregulation to be seen, in 20 years' time, as the most important single economic decision this Government has made. We are gaining a central role in creating the high-tech infrastructure for the next century. People rightly criticise UK infrastructure. But the world's new infrastructure is not roads and airports, certainly not railways. It is telecommunications. In a world where manufacturing (and increasingly service) technology crosses national boundaries in a matter of weeks, achieving a comparative advantage in international telecommunications is the most important thing any government can do.

Fergie may be stupid - but she's not alone

by Suzanne Moore



There has always been too much of Sarah Ferguson. I'm not talking about her weight but her presence. She was certainly too much for the Royal Family. Fergie we know eats too much, likes her sex too much, likes spending too much. In between all this conspicuous consumption she spins around the world from one ill-conceived interview to the next. No wonder she is thought to be out of control. While it is claimed that her excesses have brought the monarchy into disrepute it strikes me that it is actually the other way around. The Royals need Fergie to be out of control precisely so that they can remain in control.

The more extravagant and fat she is the more self-disciplined they look. How many times do we see lists of what Fergie has spent on psychics or jewellery so we can gasp in amazement at her profligacy, her lack of lustre, her sheer bloody stupidity? Here she comes again in *Hello* magazine miraculously freckle-free and chastened, whiter than white and willing to slag herself off to save us the bother. Her deranged form of self-flagellation is, of course, typically excessive. If she is to confess her sins she will confess to more sins than anyone else. If she is to be criticised by others then she will demolish herself first. All of this must be done on American chat shows and in magazines. Whatever she has discovered she has not learned to shut up or even to have a semblance of a private life.

Andrew, her ex-husband who she now defends as not being gay, by contrast does have a private life. No one is interested in how much of the Royal purse he spends each year on fripperies. No one asks him to justify his existence. No one even appears to know what this man does all day. Yet we know that in this ultimate soap it is the women, the outsiders married into this supremely dysfunctional family, who must flesh their souls at us from time to time.

Diana and Fergie do not even have to resort to kiss-and-tell. The saga of the Royals is played out bizarrely through these women's very flesh. Fergie, Duchess of York, came to represent the excesses of this arcane system of rule. All talk was of a trimmer, slim-line monarchy, free of the parasitic minor Royals. When the tide turned against Fergie towards this "lean culture" version of berated privilege, we also started worrying about Fergie's weight. Up and down she went, always struggling

to control herself. The very idea that she can now represent Weight Watchers is heart-breaking. If anything, being a bit overweight is far less of a health risk than the yo-yo dieting that Fergie has been through.

Diana, meanwhile, played the patron saint of denial to Fergie's squalid sister. Diana, unlike Fergie, could have no food, no sex, no fun. No potatoes whatsoever. We worried about her weight too. She was thinner than ever. She suffered in silence and when her desires got out of control, she

crammed herself with food that she would throw up again. She knew how to punish herself. This cycle of binge and purge underwrites both these women's sad lives. Fergie is now trying to purge herself in public but she can never undo all that binging. Yet, while these two women were in their various states of hysteria, crying themselves to sleep at night, where was the protective arm of the Firm? Where were those who could guide these silly young women into maturity? Fergie has

recently been describing her

incarceration in Buckingham Palace while Andrew was doing the Navy lark. She saw him not

more than 42 nights a year.

When she and Andrew asked if

they could live in Portland at the

married officers' quarters they

were refused. The Queen and

Prince Philip told them they

could not be together for reasons

of security. There is no reason to

believe that the Duchess is lying

here. For all of her faults, she is

merely curiously honest. Her

account of her marriage failing

to Germany, Holland and

Japan.

The sidecar had its heyday in the 1950s. During the week, the working man commuted to the factory on his motorbike (leather coat, buttons to the neck, flat cap jammed resolutely down). Come the weekend it was in theory a simple matter to hitch up the sidecar and head for the beach. For thousands of working class families the sidecar represented

affordable freedom, but with the arrival of cheap cars in the early 60s, sidecars went into instant decline.

"It's got all the disadvantages of a car and none of the advantages of

a motorcycle," says Alan Seeley of *Classic Bike* magazine.

No wonder they went out of fashion. Tony Carter of *Motorcycle News* advises anyone thinking of buying a sidecar to try it out on private land before taking to the roads.

"They steer and handle very differently," he says. "You have to

steer into corners, not counter-

steer as you do on a solo."

Even the doughty Jennifer Patterson

complained of the notoriously

difficult steering, when she

switched to a Triumph from her

90cc moped (which she likes to

call "my little fellow"). When

pushed, a spokeswoman for

Two Fat Ladies admitted that

the pair did not actually ride the

bike and sidecar from location

to location: they transport it on

a truck.

Eric Richards, the actor who plays *The Bill's* Sergeant Coyer, regularly takes his wife and son to France in one. "There's been a resurgence of interest in anything that's seen as old and British," says Peter Rivers-Fletcher, Managing Director at Watsonian Squire, the world's oldest sidecar manufacturer. He estimates that there are now between 10,000 and 20,000 sidecars on Britain's roads; although 70 per cent of their output is exported, mostly

The gender gap election

Bill Clinton's spin doctors claim he won re-election as President of the United States last week by turning the gender gap to his advantage. And British commentators have been wondering since if Tony Blair will be able to perform the same trick by following his lead.

No one disputes the size of the US "gender gap". Polls show that women backed Clinton over Dole by 54 to 38 per cent,

while men split their vote almost evenly, 43 to 44 per cent. Many leading feminists nevertheless contend that Clinton has betrayed their trust.

Clinton did pass the Violence Against

Women Act and the ban on assault weapons.

He claims credit for passing the family leave act, but this legislation provided only for unpaid time off work, and his increase in the minimum wage still leaves a family of four under the poverty line. It is true that he vetoed the ban on late-term abortions and made pro-choice judicial appointments; however, access to abortion for most women remains a serious issue.

Clinton appointed several women and minorities to his administration, but whenever the going got tough for his women nominees and officials, he cut them loose.

Hillary's role has been reduced to that of a biscuit-baking hostess and women close to the president have remarked that he strongly prefers a traditional male working environment.

In his 1992 campaign, Clinton promised to support gay rights. In office, however, he capitulated on gays in the military, gave no power to his AIDS "czar", declared that children should only be raised by married heterosexual couples and signed a bill that allows states to ban gay marriages.

Feminists became especially disenchanted in August, when Clinton signed the welfare bill. This act reverses 60 years of welfare reform. Where the poor used to have a right to federal assistance, now they will have to rely on their state's generosity. New limits have been imposed: no welfare recipient will be able to receive benefit after two years - or for more than five years during their lifetime. Meanwhile, unemployment stands at 7 million and there are 14 applicants for every job in a

fast food restaurant. The welfare bill makes no provision for job creation, job training or child care. Experts say that compared with all the other western countries, the US already does the least for the poor, and has the largest gap between the rich and the poor. Two out of three adults living in poverty are women and 44 per cent of single mothers remain below the poverty line.

The American child poverty rate is four

times greater than the average for the EU countries.

The new welfare provisions alone will throw a million more children into poverty by 2001. If a Republican president had endorsed the welfare repeal, feminists would have taken to the streets.

Some feminists have tried to put a positive spin on the situation. Gloria Steinem, of *Mrs Magazine*, claimed that Clinton had to sign the welfare bill to win the election, and that he would undo the damage during his second term. But polling data shows that Clinton's solid lead over a Republican nominee remained virtually constant for the 13 months leading up to the election - and he vetoed two other welfare bills during that period. Some of the Democrats who were up for re-election in the House and the Senate voted against the welfare bill, and then easily won their races. And welfare experts, including the moderate Democrat Senator Patrick Moynihan, have declared that Clinton will not be able to reverse the new law's elimination of welfare rights - including Clinton's.

If Clinton has proved to be less than reliable on women's issues, then how did the gender gap emerge? Image is almost

everything in American politics. Only half the eligible voting population makes the trip to the voting booth, and only a tiny minority of the voters can name the actual policies of the two main parties.

Clinton appealed to women through his use of "caring and sharing" symbolic gestures. Women voters are less likely to view the budget deficit as a priority, and they are more likely than men to support education spending, affirmative action, gay rights, health-care reform and welfare programmes. Clinton did not deliver his promised job creation scheme or health-care reform, and did little to enhance the education system. But he put more police on the beat, floated a proposal for school uniforms, and spoke out against teenage smoking and violence on television.

Above all, Clinton is an extremely skillful politician. As he shifted to the right, feminists found themselves backed into a corner. Having either pledged their firm support to Clinton early on, accepted a government appointment, or won election on his coattails, they felt that they could not voice their opposition.

And Marion Wright Edelman, of the Children's Defence Fund, said nothing in public when the welfare bill was passed.

Patricia Ireland, of the National Organisation of Women, was reduced to saying that she would vote for Clinton but would not campaign for him. The Americans who bothered to watch the Democratic Convention never saw feminist dissent; it was only allowed outside prime time, in unofficial arenas. Socialist feminists, such as Zillah Eisenstein, Kathi Politis, Barbara Ehrenreich and Frances Fox Piven, launched a full-scale critique of Clinton's policies and their voices were only heard in America's minuscule alternative media.

None of Clinton's feminist critics preferred Dole. But many are saying that there was very little difference between Clinton and Dole, and that the feminist movement must reconstruct its political autonomy so that it can vigorously oppose every assault on women's rights - including Clinton's.

The writer is an assistant professor in the department of government at Cornell University in New York State.

James Ferguson

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BT asks Government to lift golden share

**Chris Godsmark
and Michael Harrison**

BT has begun negotiations with the Government in an attempt to remove its protection against takeovers provided since privatisation 12 years ago by the so-called "golden share" in the company.

The move is aimed at persuading US regulators to approve its proposed £1bn takeover of MCI, the American long-distance phone operator, by demonstrating that the UK market is open to competition and BT is no longer protected from takeover.

The golden share allows the Government to veto changes to BT's constitution which prevents anyone from owning more than 15 per cent of the shares. The provisions, which also apply to Cable & Wireless, which was privatised in 1981, were designed to prevent the companies from being bought up by unwelcome foreign predators.

Since the announcement of the MCI merger, the biggest such deal in UK corporate history, on 3 November the issue of the golden share has become a potentially serious stumbling block for the US telephone watchdog, the Federal Communications Commission.

The FCC has to give the MCI link-up its approval if the deal is to go ahead. BT must prove to officials that US companies could enjoy the same competitive access to British telecommunications markets that BT will get in the US. AT&T, the largest US phone company, has pledged to fight the deal on the grounds that BT still has a virtual monopoly of the local telephone network to UK homes.

Last night a senior US government source said removing the golden share would eliminate one of the FCC's biggest worries. The source said: "The golden share is certainly a cause of some concern. Unavoidably so. The idea that BT could buy all of MCI without US operators having the same opportunity to take over BT raises serious worries for us."

However any move to lift BT's golden share would almost certainly have to apply to Cable & Wireless as well. This could pose difficulties for Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade.

'There are hurdles to overcome, but they are not insurmountable'

Although BT may be protected from takeover by its sheer size, C&W, valued at £1bn, would be more vulnerable. AT&T is thought to have looked at mounting a bid in the past but was deterred by the Government's special share.

The BT proposal is not thought to have been considered yet by Mr Lang or the DTI minister, John Taylor. But any decision would have to be approved at Secretary of State level.

The golden shares in BT and C&W have no time limit, unlike those in the regional electricity companies.

Earlier this year Mr Lang refused to lift the golden shares

in National Power and PowerGen, the electricity generators, after the US electricity company Southern disclosed that it was interested in bidding for National Power.

Mr Lang defended his decision on the grounds that the electricity generation market was not yet sufficiently open to competition. On those grounds he would have difficulty abolishing BT's golden share since it still controls more than 90 per cent of the UK market.

The only time a golden share was lifted, allowing a hostile foreign bid to go ahead, was when Ford of the US bought Jaguar for £1.6bn in 1989.

Speaking yesterday, Sir Peter Bonfield, BT's chief executive, said he believed the deal with MCI would take a year to get approval. "There are hurdles to overcome, but nobody believes they are insurmountable," he said.

Separately BT gave the first indications that its huge increase in advertising and marketing spending was bolding competitors in the cable industry at bay. Announcing its half yearly profits, the company disclosed that it had doubled marketing spending so far this year, adding around an extra £60m to its advertising bill. The "good-to-talk" campaign helped to raise call volumes by 11 per cent between June and September.

Pre-tax profits fell slightly from £1.61bn to £1.599bn in the six months to September, as a result of the near doubling of redundancy costs from £123m to £235m. Some 3,200 staff left BT over the period, many of them from middle management jobs.

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This makes PowerGen the first company to embark on a major share repurchasing exercise since the Government outlawed the tax credits available on such buybacks and special dividends.

The buyback would cost PowerGen around £370m at current market prices and would mean



Photograph: FT

**Michael Harrison
and Chris Godsmark**

PowerGen, the electricity generator, is to buy back a further 10 per cent of its shares, bringing the amount of capital handed back to shareholders in the past 18 months to more than £1bn.

This makes PowerGen the first company to embark on a major share repurchasing exercise since the Government outlawed the tax credits available on such buybacks and special dividends.

The buyback would cost PowerGen around £370m at current market prices and would mean

that it has repurchased almost 30 per cent of its shares since the Government sold its remaining holding in the company in spring last year.

Ed Wallis, PowerGen's chairman, denied the buyback proved it had plenty of money to pay Labour's threatened windfall tax or that it made it a virtual certainty that the com-

pany would be included in the scope of the levy.

"I don't think this does show we can afford the tax. It's a one-off situation and really quite separate," he said.

Mr Wallis also said that if the tax were to be imposed only on utilities that were monopolies, price controlled and had been lady regulated, as Labour has

suggested, then PowerGen did not fit any of those categories.

British Telecom, meanwhile, said it did not believe it would have to pay the tax because the company was now exposed to full competition for phone services. BT is also due to pay a £2.2bn special dividend to shareholders next year.

Sir Peter Bonfield, the chief

executive, said: "We don't believe we fall into the definition of what the Labour Party is saying. We don't fall into the definition of a utility."

PowerGen spent £267m buying 10 per cent of its shares in May and June after the Government blocked its £1.95bn bid for Midlands Electricity.

The buyback came as PowerGen unveiled a 4 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £138m for the first half and a market share of 22 per cent.

Separately, South West Water yesterday unveiled a better-than-expected 35 per cent increase in half-yearly pre-tax profits to £72.9m.

PowerGen to buy back another 10% of shares

GUS shares soar on £1bn acquisition

Nigel Cope

Great Universal Stores, the mail order giant, made a surprise move yesterday when it agreed to pay £1bn for Experian, an American information services company. It is GUS's first significant acquisition for more than 30 years.

GUS's shares soared 57.5p to 648p on the news as the City took the deal as a sign of a new era at the slumbering retail giant where Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale took over as chairman in August.

The City had been pondering the possibility of a share buy-back, a demerger of the group's Burberry division, or a deal to acquire Next, the highly successful stores group where Lord Wolfson is non-executive chairman.

Lord Wolfson admitted publicly for the first time yesterday that the GUS board had discussed the possibility of a Next takeover "several times".

The Experian acquisition virtually wipes out GUS's £1.2bn cash pile, leaving the company with net cash of £150m.

GUS is buying Experian to merge it with CCN, its own credit rating and database business which has been the fastest growing part of the group over the last four years. Discussions on the deal started in June.

"This is a unique opportunity to create a truly global business with the fullest range of information products across the globe," Lord Wolfson said. He added that it would give the enlarged business critical mass in the US, enable it to offer a more comprehensive service to multinational clients and reduce the cost of new product develop-

ment. It will be able to expand more rapidly in developing economies where use of credit is growing rapidly.

Both CCN and Experian have developed vast databases on consumers, businesses, vehicles and property. CCN holds credit details on 44 million people, 3 million businesses and 50 million vehicles. Experian's three databases – on consumers, businesses and real estate – contain information on 190 million individuals, 31 million households and 53 million properties.

CCN is stronger in retail location services where it works on behalf of companies such as McDonald's and Boots to target the best locations for new outlets. Experian has been developing a powerful new software system, File One.

Based in Orange County, California, Experian was originally part of TWR, a US automotive and engineering company. It was sold to a consortium of businesses in February for \$1.2bn (£721m). It recorded profits of \$109m on sales of \$540m last year though profits growth has been slowing. CCN was founded in 1980 and is based in Nottingham. It recorded profits of £24m on sales of £183m last year.

City analysts welcomed the deal. Tony Shirel of BZW said it reduced GUS's dependence on the UK mail order market and would add £30m of profits next year. John Richards of NatWest Securities said that while the deal "looked good", the decline of GUS's core home shopping business still needed to be addressed.

GUS reports its half-year results in two weeks.

Cautious backing for EU's steel state aid regime

Michael Harrison

The European Union last night agreed a new state aid regime for the steel industry after a compromise deal that will allow Brussels to block subsidies that distort competition but still allow governments to fund closure programmes.

The regime, which will run for five years from next January, was given a cautious welcome

by the British Government and British steelmakers.

Britain supported by Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, had insisted that the new code be as least as tough as the existing regime for fear that countries in southern Europe would be tempted to unfairly subsidise their steel industries.

The new regime will allow

projects, environmental protection and partial closure programmes.

The provisions agreed last night are much tougher than those originally proposed by Brussels in March, which some members states had feared would fail to tackle the problem of overcapacity and lead to further subsidy.

Greg Knight, Britain's industry minister, welcomed the new code, saying: "I am pleased that after some hard negotia-

sions, agreement has been reached on tight state aid to the steel industry. This success has avoided the undesirable prospect of a period without a code which would have encouraged further support for uncompetitive companies and would run counter to the terms of the common market."

The British Iron and Steel Producers' Association gave more cautious backing, saying that whether the new code resulted in real and efficient control of state aid would depend on the commission's determination to stamp out competitive distortion.

It said that changes insisted on by the British government had closed the worst loopholes but said it was disappointed that more of the amendments proposed by the UK steel industry had not been adopted.

RBS to sell life stake to Widows

Nic Cicutti

Royal Bank of Scotland said yesterday it was preparing to sell a stake of at least 20 per cent in its life assurance subsidiary to the mutually-owned insurer Scottish Widows, in a move which some analysts said could lead to a merger between both companies.

The two companies' announcement of plans to work together follow the ending by RBS of its relationship with Scottish Equitable.

Scottish Equitable, owned by the Dutch company Aegon,

is selling back its 20 per cent share in RBS's bancassurance subsidiary, Royal Scottish Assurance (RSA). It is understood the bank was unhappy with Aegon's acquisitive strategy. Scottish Widows is expected to buy a similar number of shares in RSA.

Both the bank and the Widows yesterday declined to set a value on the stake at issue. Analysts said that RSA was valued at about £80m, which would lead to a price of between £15m and £20m.

George Mathewson, chief executive at Royal Scottish Assurance and devel-

oping a range of products, Widows will also play a crucial role in the expansion of Direct Line Life, the telephone-based life division of RBS.

Mr Mathewson said: "We're focused on the moment on Royal Scottish Assurance, but we do see the potential for other types of co-operation and so we're building a relationship which will give us a stability and a confidence whereby we can develop other products."

In addition to providing administrative services for Royal Scottish Assurance and devel-

Labour and Knight to meet

Jill Treanor

Banking Correspondent

Mike O'Brien, the Labour Party's financial services spokesman, will next week meet

Angela Knight, the Treasury minister, to try to hammer out an agreement over the Government's controversial plans to make changes to the Building Societies Bill.

The Labour Party's support for the proposed legislation is vital if Mrs Knight is to get her new-look Bill through Parliament. "I hope we can achieve consensus," Mr O'Brien said yesterday. "We want to see this Bill on the statute books."

The planned changes to the Bill could delay share and cash hand-outs to millions of building society members. They may even threaten the plans of some societies to convert to bank status before they can become banks.

The newly converted banks would lose the protection immediately after buying a building society or any other type of financial institution.

Societies are also concerned about confusion over the planned legislation which may force them to revise the weighty transfer documents that must be sent to the members before they can become banks.

It's quite feasible that if legislation gets anywhere near the statute books in this shape, the board of directors would have to look very, very carefully as to whether to go ahead with the flotation," John Caine, director of corporate affairs at the Alliance & Leicester building society said yesterday.

The Alliance & Leicester has already sent a 96-page transfer document to each of 3.5 million members.

The planned removal of take-over protection has pleased the Building Societies Association, which has lobbied hard to get this right removed.

Andrew Large set for five more years as head of SIB

Nic Cicutti

Sir Andrew Large, chairman of the Securities and Investments Board, is believed to be discussing the possibility of a further five-year term at the helm of the City regulator when his period of office ends next year.

It is understood that Sir Andrew, 54, may have been unofficially sounded out by the Treasury with a view to staying on at the SIB. An announcement is expected early next year.

His continued presence at SIB is seen as ensuring that work begun by the regulator on the pensions mis-selling review, together with longer-term initiatives, is completed.

It is understood that the re-appointment of Sir Andrew would not be opposed by Labour or the Conservatives, regardless of which party wins the general election.

Mike O'Brien, the Labour party's financial services spokesman, has committed himself to a review of financial

services, with a beefed-up SIB taking on the role of various small front-line regulators.

Sir Andrew, a former banker who joined the regulator in mid-1992, has been heavily involved in identifying and resolving the pension mis-selling scandal.

Since taking over at SIB, Sir Andrew, a former banker who joined the regulator in mid-1992, has been heavily involved in identifying and resolving the pension mis-selling scandal.

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COMMENT

BSkyB talks are opening a Pandora's box

At the end of the day, David, it's only fair to say, we're really over the moon on this one. And well they might be. The possibility of pay per view being introduced early for top football matches sent share prices among the quoted clubs soaring yesterday. It is not hard to see why. Just as the introduction of subscription television was great news for the Premier League, allowing football clubs to charge higher to的梦想 of sums for TV rights, pay per view is going to be even better.

Some of the figures being talked of yesterday may be an exaggeration but there is no doubt that top clubs stand to get a lot more out of pay per view than the present all embracing contract with BSkyB. There is, apparently, no limit on what the committed football fan is prepared to pay. A good deal for football clubs then, or some of the top ones anyway, but is it such a great one for BSkyB? That it assumes BSkyB can both maintain its monopoly of the League and make stick the 50/50 split in revenues between club and distributor proposed. To pull that off is going to require some fancy footwork by Sky, for once the League begins to fragment into club by club deals, it will grow progressively harder to keep control of the show.

Until recently Sky held all the cards. Though others tried to snatch the Premier League from Sky's grasp, the outcome was never in any doubt, for Sky is the only broadcaster capable of reaching enough viewers

- 4m potentially - to make the sums add up. The strong likelihood that pay-per-view, rather than bog standard pay-TV, will be the format of the future has meant that the advantage is swinging away from the distributor and towards the rights holder.

Up until now Sky has prospered because it was the only game in town, controlling all the sport and movie rights and extracting onerous terms from content suppliers desperate for carriage. That will not be true when cable reaches critical mass, and when (if) digital terrestrial television is introduced. Furthermore, as soon as that nice Mr Blair frees up BT to offer broadcast TV, there'll be another powerful competitor in the market place. BSkyB has a head's start and the best developed plans for TV of any company. Moreover, Sky already has a subscription TV contract with the League, so unless regulators force the pace, it doesn't for the time being have to go down the pay per view route. By talking to the clubs about doing so Sky is opening Pandora's box. There is every possibility that pay per view will usher in a flood of new competitors and undermine Sky's present stranglehold in the process.

GUS goes on a shopping spree

The top brass at Great Universal Stores was apparently expecting the company's

shares to fall yesterday on news of its £1bn Californian swoop. That they rose instead was due less to City admiration for what GUS had done, and more to the fact that this slumbering old giant had done anything at all. Good old GUS's has become so notorious for inaction that first reaction could only be one of elated astonishment. Surely not £1bn, not £1bn, not in America?

This is a dusty old company that has not done a sizeable deal in 30 years, squirming away £1bn plus in cash as a result. It has never tapped the market for new equity and never had any borrowings of any significance. It has never even had a finance director, preferring a treasury function instead. But suddenly strange things are happening. It all seems to be down to the new man at the top. While he has the same name as the last two, Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, also chairman of Next, doesn't seem to belong to the same family. He has pledged a more open relationship with the City. Analysis were even granted an audience yesterday. A public relations company has been hired to spread the gospel according to GUS far and wide. And now he's gone out and spent the group's entire cash pile in one go.

A new man in a hurry with a big balance sheet behind him is generally a pretty deadly combination. Furthermore, when a company has been "asleep" as long as GUS has, there's every possibility of accidents as it arises from its slumbers. And when so many UK retailers have come a cropper in the "graveyard"

US market, how can we be sure GUS will fare any better?

But for the time being the new Wolfson at the helm perhaps deserves the benefit of the doubt. Credit rating and information services are growth markets. Putting Experian together with GUS's existing CCN division will create one of the largest companies of its kind in the world. Knowledge of what everyone eats for breakfast and the like is apparently a valuable commodity among the world's leading multi-nationals.

Lord Wolfson makes a good case for this takeover and the markets are with him. For his next trick, he will need to deliver better performance in the core home shopping division, which was the cause of May's unprecedented profits warning.

DTI should surrender golden shares

When it comes to using its golden share in privatised companies the Government's track record has proved decidedly patchy. So it should be interesting to see how Ian Lang reacts to British Telecom's request that the Government should either give up or substantially alter its right of veto over what happens in the telecoms industry.

The general policy of ministers has been to issue these things a bit like Blue Peter badges and then leave them to gather dust in the attic until some upstart Johnny for-

eigner comes along wanting to buy a piece of the British industrial landscape.

In the case of Jaguar, which was supposed to be protected from foreign takeover for five years, the golden share turned out to be made of baser metal. The Government gave up its special share as soon as the first suitor, Ford, motored into view. However, when another US predator tried to sneak up on National Power from behind Mr Lang lost no time in raising the golden share to his breast, thus sending the rotters packing.

On that occasion, the logic was that the electricity generation market was not fully open to competition. If applied the same criteria to BT then the golden share would have to stay in place since BT still controls more than 90 per cent of the market.

There is, however, a big difference this time around. It is BT which is forcing the issue, not an overseas predator. BT thinks the protective arm of Mr Lang needs removing from around its shoulder if it is to persuade the Americans that they should have no objection to the takeover of MCI.

The added complication is that if BT's golden share is removed, the same will have to happen to Cable and Wireless. BT's sheer size may deter all but the biggest bidder but C&W, capitalised at £10.6bn, could be much more easily digested. But if the DTI really believes in all that rhetoric about Britain being in the van of liberalisation, then it should surrender its golden shares in both companies.

IN BRIEF

• Donald Anderson, a former Brent Walker executive, yesterday denied orchestrating a "massive" cover-up to hide years of false profit-taking. The former finance director of the entertainment empire's film and television arm said he had never been involved in creating bogus documents designed to conceal the truth. He has denied one charge of attempting to pervert the course of justice. He told Southwark Crown Court that papers the Crown claimed pointed to his guilt were nothing of the sort, and insisted they had been part of a detailed analysis to confirm the business's finances were above board.

• US inflation and retail sales data for October were in line with analysts' expectations, showing that the economy remained in balance, economists said. "For a change, this data had no major surprises," said Carol Stone, an economist with Nomura Securities International. The overall Consumer Price Index rose slightly to 2.6 per cent year-on-year as a result of higher food and energy prices.

• Bank of Ireland yesterday reported interim pre-tax profits of £193.1m, up from £191.8m last year, in line with analysts' expectations. Maurice Keane, deputy chief executive of the bank, said its planned £600m acquisition of Bristol & West Building Society was on schedule.

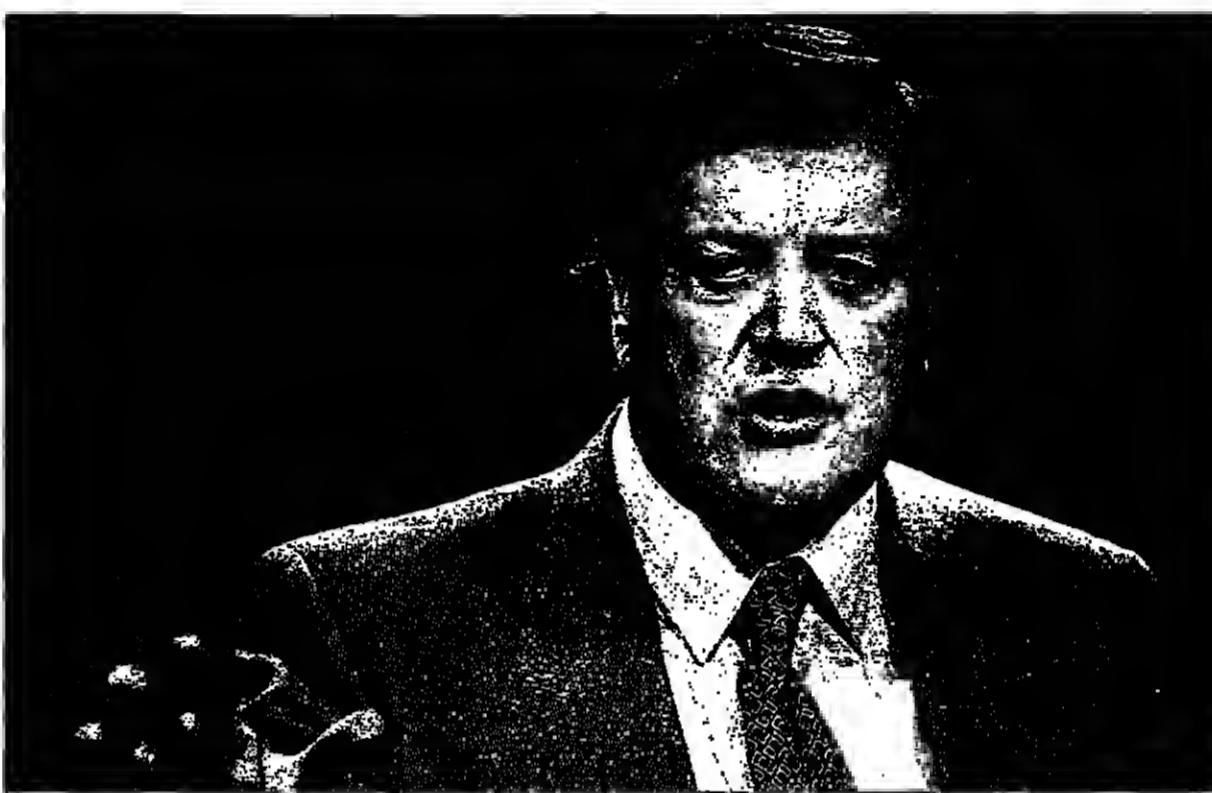
• Offer, the UK electricity regulator, said Dominion Resources' £1.3bn recommended cash bid for East Midlands Electricity raised issues similar to those raised by previous takeover moves for regional electricity companies. The regulator said that, if the takeover were to proceed, a Public Electricity Supply Licence would be held by a subsidiary company rather than by a parent company. In these circumstances measures are necessary to provide protection for customers and to maintain regulatory effectiveness.

• Bayerische-Hypotheke-und-Wechsel-Bank (Hypo-Bank), the German bank, spent £60m on increasing its stake in Foreign & Colonial, one of Britain's top six institutional fund management groups, from 50 to 65 per cent.

• The Merchant Navy Officers' Pension Fund has granted Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, the fund management rocked by the Peter Young scandal, a stay of execution to manage more than £200m of its pension money. The pension fund's trustees decided not to immediately review the mandate, saving Morgan Grenfell from the humiliation of having to rebid for the mandate.

• Robert Fraser Asset Management suspended trading in its shares at 2.5p pending a possible reverse takeover deal. "A transaction is being considered which may lead to a significant change in the company, including changes to the board, the name and the capital structure of the company," the company said.

• UK steel production in October increased by 5.5 per cent over the previous month, the British Iron and Steel Producers Association said. Weekly production in October reached an average 374,300 tonnes, compared with 354,800 tonnes in September.



Off the mark: Some economists believe that Kenneth Clarke's inflation target is unachievable

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The Government has almost no chance of meeting its inflation target, economists warned yesterday, after the release of much worse-than-expected inflation figures for October, hit by sharply higher petrol prices and housing costs.

The underlying rate of inflation, which is the most closely monitored measure and excludes mortgage interest costs, rose from an annual rate of 2.9 per cent in September to 3.3 per cent last month, compared with the market forecast of 3.1 per cent.

Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, has repeatedly said he believes further increases in interest

Inflation leap shocks City

One economist, Adam Cole from HSBC James Capel, described the figures as "very disappointing indeed" and worse, on an underlying basis, than any other European Union country apart from Greece.

He added: "The Chancellor's target of 2.5 per cent now looks virtually unachievable. I just don't see how he can hit it."

Other inflation measures also rose by more than predicted. The headline rate surged from 2.1 per cent in the year to September to 2.7 per cent in October, while the Bank of England's preferred figure, which strips out both mort-

gage payments and indirect taxes, jumped from 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent.

The figures provide fresh evidence that the economic recovery is having a clear impact on prices. Though manufacturers' wholesale prices remain depressed, the data suggests retailers are using improving consumer confidence to boost their profit margins.

Motoring costs went up by 6.4 per cent compared with the previous year, largely because of the increase in petrol prices. The Office for National Statistics, which compiles the figures, said the price of petrol had risen by around 4p a litre since July.

More increases are possible as higher oil prices feed through to the petrol pumps.

Crestco resists City calls to suspend operations

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

Registers to the new Crest settlement system for weeks or months, because of alarm about its performance.

Crestco admitted yesterday a delay of a month or two beyond the April date scheduled for full operation was likely to be an option discussed at a meeting of the board on 29 November. Another possibility could be further delays in transferring FTSE 100 companies to Crest.

Crest sources also suggested that the Securities and Futures Authority could limit the amount of business done by some firms that have had difficulty coping with the new system, because of the financial risk of settlement delays.

However, Ian Saville, chief executive, insisted he would resist any delays to the present overall timetable of full operation by April, and he said there

was no crisis, "only inevitable teething problems with a very complex system".

Mr Saville said there had been a significant and noticeable improvement in the much criticised performance of the settlement system over the last 10 days. He added: "We hope to demonstrate to the board that Crest is stable enough to push ahead with the timetable."

If City critics of Crest win the day at the board meeting and force a suspension, it will be a severe embarrassment for the Bank of England, which steered the Crest project through to fruition after the Stock Exchange's Taurus settlement system was abandoned. The Stock Exchange is keeping the option of continuing for longer with the old Talisman settlement system, just in case.

Mr Saville said the board's decision would be a difficult one, adding that the company would have to talk to the SFA and the Stock Exchange about whether the industry ... is ready for the continued pace of transition".

He admitted however that a problem with a piece of software called Circles was Crestco's fault, but said it affected only 2 to 3 per cent of settlements.

50% float of Equity & Law could raise £400m

Nic Cicutti

Equity & Law, the UK subsidiary of giant insurer Axa which earlier this week announced a merger with the rival French UAP group, is considering a partial stock market flotation in a move that could raise up to £400m.

The partial flotation of up to 50 per cent of Equity & Law's holding is understood to be the outcome of initial discussions between the UK firm, based in High Wycombe, and its French parent.

However, a wholesale float is thought to have been ruled out, in part because of objections by Axa's chairman, Claude Bechart. One industry source said Mr Bechart does not want to relinquish the company's stake in a UK subsidiary.

Although no firm decision has been taken, an announcement is thought likely next year.

The partial flotation would reflect a similar strategy adopted by both Axa and Union des Assurances de Paris (UAP), the French firm with which it is about to merge in a £5.3bn deal.

UAP, which owns Sun Life, a life and pensions company in the UK, part-floated 40 per cent of its UK arm earlier this year, raising up to £50m, although the exercise was marred by falling stock markets.

The company said at the time that its decision followed donations around the world, aimed at giving its subsidiaries greater local involvement while subjecting it to local "shareholder discipline".

Axa, which has large stakes in National Mutual in Australia and Equitable, in the US, has also opted for part-floatations of the companies it owns.

Earlier this week, Axa and UAP announced their merger, a decision which will create the world's second-largest insurance company after Nippon

from their matches, and have been resisting suggestions from the Sky camp that revenues from pay-per-view be split between the rights holder and the broadcaster.

Manchester United, in particular, is known to be pushing for the early introduction of pay-per-view. A leading institutional shareholder in the club said: "Manchester United has the least need of the collective bar-

gaining process, as they are the biggest name in the game."

Meanwhile, the cable industry, under the leadership of Telewest, the second-largest operator, is in the early stages of planning a pay-per-view movie service aimed at giving cable an advantage over satellite in the digital age. It is believed that Cable & Wireless Communications, the nation's largest operator, is also involved in the discussions. The

companies plan to handle "pay-per-view" movies with cheap telephone, as a key marketing tool.

The movies are linked to growing expectations that pay-per-view will be the fastest growing industry in the media by the turn of the decade. According to a study by Salomon Brothers, the merchant bank, Europe could generate £3bn a year by 2001 and £9bn annually by 2005.

News of the accelerated pay-per-view plans sent the shares of Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur climbing. Manchester United closed at 532.5p, up 26.5p, while Tottenham was ahead 14.5p at 545p. BSkyB saw a brief rise in caring trading but settled back to close at 519.5p, down 1.5p on the day.

Media analysts said yesterday that regulatory pressures on BSkyB, the dominant pay-TV broadcaster, as well as the likelihood of increased competition would combine to create opportunities for new entrants to the pay-per-view market.

Peter Reid will be one of beneficiaries of the flotation. It emerged last week that he had paid £300,000 for a significant stake in the club. After the float Mr Reid's 5 per cent stake will be worth £2m-£2.5m.

The shares are expected to start trading next month.

Tottenham AGM, page 26

Sunderland FC plans flotation

Nigel Cope

Sunderland yesterday became the latest football club to shoot for glory in the City as well as on the pitch when it announced plans to seek a stock market listing later this year. The float will raise £11m-£12m of new funds and value the club at £40m-£45m.

The funds will be used to repay loans of £6m taken out to build Sunderland's new £15m

changed everything and with the opportunity of pay per view, the opportunities could be even greater."

Peter Reid will be one of beneficiaries of the flotation. It emerged last week that he had paid £300,000 for a significant stake in the club. After the float Mr Reid's 5 per cent stake will be worth £2m-£2.5m.

The shares are expected to start trading next month.

Tottenham AGM, page 26

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shares

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PERIOD	Index	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PERIOD	Index	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	PERIOD	Index						
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121 811	811	Bam Stevens	54	-0.1	62,703,198			104 75	75	Belen	52	-0.1	37,621,141			104 75	75	Bentley	52	-0.1	5,124,259			475 475	475	Hiscox Motor	50.5	-0.5	1,000
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Funds no longer on ice for skate star

Lloyd's to be given new look as a business

Peter Rodgers
Financial Editor

The Lloyd's insurance market is to overhaul its own central organisation to give it a more business-like shape. Ron Chandler, the chief executive, announced yesterday.

Weeks after the completion of a £2.2bn rescue plan, Mr Sandler said the restructuring would split Lloyd's central services department, with turnover of £180m a year, into five new business units, each of which would have its own managing director and managing board.

Mr Sandler said: "They will be run as businesses with as much bottom-line discipline as can be engineered."

The restructuring comes after a detailed consultation with members and is a response to widespread criticism in the market of the way Lloyd's is managed internally.

Rather than a direct result of the rescue plan, it appears to be a case of catching up on reforms that were put to one side as the market struggled to survive after losing \$8bn in a few years.

Firms told Lloyd's that they wanted greater transparency of activities, including costs and charges, more accountability and responsiveness and wider choice of where they buy their services. They will be charged for what they use, rather than flat fees.

As part of the plan, Lloyd's intends to open up some services to outside competition, so firms in the market can choose whether to buy from Lloyd's or from independent companies. At the same time, Lloyd's wants its new business units to seek work outside the market, from the rest of the insurance industry in the City. Mr Sandler said: "If a unit is not proving responsive to the needs of the market the demands for its services will atrophy."



Shaping up: David Rowland will be freed to focus on longer-term issues by the creation of new business units

The restructuring is separate from Lloyd's plans for cost reductions, but Mr Sandler acknowledged that more jobs are to go among Lloyd's staff and contract workforce of 2,400.

He said: "Inevitably, in a business in which people are an important part of the costs I anticipate that there will be job losses."

The five new businesses are members' services, which includes financial housekeeping for the membership, and insurance services, which embrace the

policy-signing office and the claims office.

The others will be facilities management, business development, and North America, which will promote the market and liaise with regulators in the US and Canada.

The units will each be responsible to a user board which will include representatives from the market. Mr Sandler said the new structure would allow the board of the market, chaired by David Rowland, to focus on strategic and longer-term issues.

Expect static profits for the year to

When Sir Peter Bonfield arrived at BT's headquarters earlier this year as the corporation's new chief executive, he immediately began a campaign to fight bureaucracy and remove the last traces of civil service culture. Ten months later much has changed at BT Centre and much has happened to BT, with the £1.3bn takeover of MCI to name but one. But Sir Peter has been unable to lift BT's share price.

The MCI deal provided two convincing reasons why the underlying value of BT shares should have risen from around 350p to 400p. The first is that the company will pay a 35p-a-share special dividend next September, which should in theory give a short-term lift to the price. Secondly, the company also pledged to pay total dividends of 19.8p for this year, a rise of 6.1 per cent on last year. Another boost should have come from the more generous price formula agreed with the industry regulator, Ofcom, which from next August excludes almost all business calls from price controls. It means just 20 per cent of BT's call revenues will be subject to price regulation, compared with 60 per cent today.

Yet despite all this, the shares have been disappointing, briefly surging to 385p after the announcement, only to fall back towards 360p in the days that followed. There are two reasons for this, one strategic, the other technical. Firstly, worries over regulation are being replaced by new fears over BT's international expansion. If the MCI deal goes through in a year, it will transform the company's balance sheet, adding £3.5bn of debt, and transform BT from a safe utility into a growth-oriented telecoms group. Nobody, apart from management, is sure it can handle the transition.

The second concern perplexing City analysts is that after the special dividend has been paid out, the annual dividend payout will be rebased, in BT's words, by about 10 per cent. This means that the annual dividend for 1997-8, the year after the merger, will start from a 10 per cent lower base, though a likely growth rate of 6 to 7 per cent means the net reduction could be a mere modest 3 per cent.

However, yesterday's second-quarter results gave investors food for thought. BT is clearly starting to successfully fight back against cable companies, with growth of 11 per cent in inland call volumes between the first and second quarters. Turnover also rose more strongly than last year, up by 4.9 per cent to £3.73bn between June and September. So the picture of a declining utility searching overseas for customers may have been overblown.

Expect static profits for the year to

rise in £207m next and £235m in 1998, when the forward p/e falls to a market rating of 13.

That looks about right given the buoyant state of the world hotel market, the potential benefits of the Hilton deal and continued recovery in the fortunes of the betting industry.

City wary of the changing face of BT

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

the end of March of £3.1bn. A prospective yield of 6.7 per cent with the shares up 9p at 369.5p, should underpin them. But growth from here may be slow. Hnld.

Ladbroke bounces back

What a difference a year makes. Exactly 12 months ago, Ladbroke, the hotels and gaming group, issued a profit warning blaming difficult trading in its betting and gaming division on the start of the National Lottery and the introduction of instant-win scratchcards. The news sent the shares to a 10-year low of 123p. Since then they have outperformed the market by 43 per cent, even after yesterday's 3p fall to 195.5p.

The turnaround has been helped by a fall-off in scratchcard sales, a one percentage point cut in betting duty to 9 per cent, the installation of slot machines in betting shops and the introduction of gambling on the Irish Lottery. Ladbroke has also made the strategically significant decision to

unify the Hilton brand and allow it to be marketed centrally on a worldwide basis.

Once the deal with Hilton Hotel Corporation, which owns the Hilton name in the US, is finalised, HHC will hold 5 per cent of Ladbroke's shares.

Yesterday's third-quarter trading update provided little in the way of new detail on the alliance's progress, which is hardly surprising as the deal has yet to be formally ratified. Moreover, its benefits are likely to take several years to show through.

Indeed, apart from news that Ladbroke had received approval for a gambling licence from the state of Nevada, the only new line from the statement was confirmation that jockey Frankie Dettori's historic seven wins at Ascot in September had cost the betting division £8m. That left profits at Britain's biggest bookie slightly lower than in the corresponding period.

Ladbroke, along with the rest of the racing industry, is countering the prospect of the introduction early next year of a mid-week National Lottery draw by lobbying for a 1.5 per cent cut in the betting duty in the Budget.

BZW has pencilled in pre-exceptional profits for this year of £156m,

rising in £207m next and £235m in 1998, when the forward p/e falls to a market rating of 13.

That looks about right given the buoyant state of the world hotel market, the potential benefits of the

Hilton deal and continued recovery in the fortunes of the betting industry.

Bull markets boost Perpetual

Martyn Arbib, chairman of Perpetual, is a very wealthy man. Shares in his fund management group have grown over 10 times since 1992 and a owner of over half of them, he has been the chief beneficiary.

It is a remarkable performance for a company which spent the first five years of its existence struggling to stay above its 180p float price.

The question is whether it can continue. The signals from yesterday's results for the year to September pointed in different directions. On the positive side, the 46 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £37.2m was another stunning result for a company which made much less than a tenth of that in the opening years of the decade.

These sparkling figures came on the back of a 40 per cent increase in fund under management to £6.6bn.

But there lies the rub. Perpetual's strong track record and well-honed marketing skills pulled in another £1.1bn of funds over the past year, helping to cement its market leadership in unit trust-linked personal equity plans. The group also lifted its overall market share in the market for authorised unit trusts from 3.7 to 4.2 per cent.

Few could question such a performance, but without much effort, fund managers gain a double lift during a bull phase for the stock market, like now.

Rising markets tend to suck in new money and new punters, particularly the relatively unsophisticated sort who are attracted to unit trusts. Meanwhile, rising share values automatically boost funds under management, with Perpetual gaining another £800m over the latest 12 months.

Martyn Arbib's gentle warning yesterday over the heights at which shares round the world are trading left his own shares at £22.5, down 102.5p. That is the main problem ahead for Perpetual and explains why profits could range between £87m and £65m this year, putting the shares on a forward price/earnings ratio of 17. Given the uncertainties, purchases should be deferred.

Ibstock chief set for £1.2m payoff

Magnus Grimond

Boardroom payoffs totalling close to £1m were in prospect yesterday as Ibstock, Britain's biggest brick-maker, and Ricardo, the automotive design engineers, both lost their chief executives.

Ibstock is expected to pay out just over £500,000 following the announcement that Ian Macellan, the managing director, is to resign after losing the confidence of the board. The news comes after a period of upheaval at Ibstock, whose £160m acquisition of Redland's brick business earlier this year propelled it to the number one position in the market.

Mr Macellan, who will leave at the end of the year, is on a three year contract at a current salary of £162,000 a year. He said yesterday that, as a result of the Redland acquisition, Ibstock now had a UK operation with great profit potential for the long term. "I am proud of these achievements on behalf of the company and am pleased now to hand over as chief executive to my colleague Philip Mengel who, I am confident, is the right man to lead the company in the next phase of its development."

Sir Colin Hope, chairman, said integrating the Redland business and Tarmac's brick assets acquired in 1995 will be the first task facing Mr Mengel. He said they were making "satisfactory progress" with the integration of Redland.

In a separate move, Ricardo said its board had dismissed Christopher Ross, chief executive, "with immediate effect" to replace him with Rodney Westhead, the finance director. No reasons were given for the dismissal of Mr Ross, who has been in the job four years.

However, the indications were that he would be entitled to pick up a compensation payment of around £430,000. He was paid a salary of £215,000 and his contract laid down a notice period of two years.

\$74m Biotech deal opens up Japan's market

Magnus Grimond

British Biotech has taken a big step in completing world-wide distribution for its Marimastat anti-cancer drug with the announcement of a \$74m (£44.5m) development and marketing deal with Tanabe Seiyaku, Japan's eighth-biggest pharmaceuticals group.

In exchange for exclusive marketing rights in Japan, Tanabe will take on the Japanese development of the drug and make an initial payment of \$7m, with up to \$67m more depending on a successful launch. Biotech will also receive royalties on sales in Japan thought to be "significantly higher than 25 per cent".

Typically, Western companies doing deals in Japan are lucky to obtain royalties of 15 per cent, according to one broker.

Japan is the last big market still to be cracked by Marimastat. The drug is currently in phase III trials in Europe and North America, the last hurdle to what is hoped will be official approval and first sales in the West in around 1999.

Japan has around 2 million cancer patients, about a quarter of European and North American markets put together. But Biotech has always faced much greater obstacles in breaking into the market, given the requirement that new drugs must be tested on Japanese patients before receiving official

approval. As a result, the group has been looking for a partner to help launch the product in Japan for some time.

A company spokeswoman said: "For a company at this stage of development, it would not be a very useful use of shareholders' funds if we went about setting up a subsidiary over there when we can work with an already established company."

Trials of Marimastat in human patients are expected to start in Japan next year and, if all goes well, brokers expect it to hit the Japanese market around 2002. Tanabe was chosen partly because it was more sanguine about the launch date for Marimastat than some of its rivals, which suggested the process could take up to 14 years.

The Osaka-based Tanabe, which dates its foundation to 1678, had sales of \$2bn last year. The group's best-known product is Cardizem, a cardiovascular drug launched in 1989 which is distributed in the rest of the world by Hoechst Marion Rousset and is said to be the world's 18th best-selling pharmaceutical.

Separately, SmithKline Beecham announced that its Hycamtin treatment for cancer of the ovaries had received official EU approval. The drug is a second line of defence for patients with metastatic cancer of the ovary after the failure of initial or subsequent therapy.

Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers's first-half profits to 28 September 1996 slipped to £4.68m from £4.8m last time, while the interim dividend rose to 4.25p from 3.85p. Richard Storey, chairman, said the first 26 weeks of the financial year had borne out his prediction of several short-term pressures on profitability. The company spent £14.5m on new presses at Sunderland and Hartlepool, leading to "significant funding costs without any revenue benefits, the start of substantial benefits being expected next financial year", Mr Storey said.

• Paper group Scapa Group's interim profits rose to £30.2m for the six months to 30 September 1996 from £27.7m last time. Chief executive David Dunn warned the strength of sterling could hit overseas earnings, but added: "The paper industry is forecasting a gradual recovery from its recent trough."

• Siebe has won Indian government permission to establish its first manufacturing plant there, paving the way for an initial investment of £8m. The Windsor-based industrial controls maker, which has sold in India since 1933, said it plans to make industrial valves, plant safety shutdown systems and process control equipment at a new factory near Madras.

• Psion shares rose 45p to 441.5p, after the British personal computer maker said it was placing 3.5 million new ordinary shares to raise around £14m to expand business in 1997. Psion said demand for products was ahead of expectations and that current trading performance was on target. The new shares would be placed at 400p each and represent around 5 per cent of the firm's issued ordinary share capital. Dealings start on 19 November.

• Maid, a provider of on-line business information, said its third-quarter pre tax loss narrowed as sales and subscriber growth continued. Maid posted a pre-tax loss of £2.4m, down from £3.4m last time. For the first nine months of fiscal year 1996, the loss increased to £5.7m from £5m, as Maid stepped up its investments in expanding operations. The company said it had now completed its infrastructure investments and anticipated breaking into profit it early next year.

• Appleby Westward Group increased pre tax profits to £450,000 for the six months to 7 September compared to £191,000 last time and maintained the interim dividend at 3.2p. Chairman Roger Harvey said the second half of the company's financial year had generally been more difficult than the first, but he was confident the outcome for the year as a whole would be satisfactory, especially when compared with the previous three years.

• Shares in Action Computer Supplies, a mail-order supplier of IT products to business users, rose 7 per cent to 142.5p after the company reported a sharp profit rise in its first results since its stock market debut. Action said post-tax profits of £2.058m in the year to 30 August exceeded its forecast of £1.94m made in its flotation prospectus, with turnover up 32 per cent at £134.6m.

IN BRIEF

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business

Data Bank	
FTSE 100	3926.1 - 0.8
FTSE 250	4398.9 - 11.3
FTSE 350	1959.7 - 1.5
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sport

Boro move to allay fears over foreign affairs

One of Boro's boys from Brazil was paraded down at the Riverside Stadium yesterday – not, however, the one the media, and indeed the Middlesbrough management, had gathered see.

The frizzy-haired employee Bryan Robson calls "Emma" was visiting a sick aunt. It may have seemed very Jane Austen, but the ailing relative happened to be somewhere in the north of Brazil.

In the absence, without leave, of the midfielder from Rio, Juninho was wheeled in front of the cameras and tape recorders

to prove that Middlesbrough still had at least one boy from Brazil.

Whether Emerson will return to join him remains doubtful, even though Robson left ajar a door to possible reconciliation.

"I have not put a time on Emerson's return," the Middlesbrough manager said, contradicting threats of legal action if the 24-year-old failed to report for training yesterday.

"His aunt has been taken ill and he's gone to see her. That's the latest I know. There are bound to be some problems in a club which has 50 players. But you don't expect players to go against contracts, especially

when they are just a few months into them."

Emerson, who has played just 14 games since his £4m summer move from Porto, intends to make his premature separation from Middlesbrough a permanent one, citing his wife's failure to take to the Teesside air.

His agent, Da Silva Vega, was in Italy yesterday, negotiating on his behalf with Parma. Carlo Ancelotti, coach of the Serie A club, is keen to invest the £4.5m Parma received from the sale of Gianfranco Zola to Chelsea in the uncapped Brazilian.

The situation is also being closely monitored by Benfica,

Simon Turnbull on the Teesside club who are trying to sort out problems with their Brazilian contingent

Roma and Barcelona, under whose coach, Bobby Robson, Emerson played at Porto last season. Middlesbrough, however, insist he is not for sale.

Indeed, Steve Gibson, the Middlesbrough chairman, has warned he may sue if Emerson fails to return to Teesside. He may also seek a ban by Fifa, the game's world governing body. "Emerson has signed a four

year contract with us," Gibson said. "His future is here and he won't be allowed to leave."

Given the circumstances, Juninho's choice of words yesterday were perhaps unfortunate. "I have two years more," he said. "I don't want out."

They did little to dispel the belief that being contracted to Middlesbrough, for the foreign legionnaires at least, is some

kind of internment. It was to counter such a growing perception, and to deny in public escape plans attributed to him in an Italian newspaper, that Juninho spoke in public yesterday.

With Branco gone, Emerson likely to stay away, Fabrizio Ravanelli reportedly unhappy, and Nick Barnby departed because of a disparity in his pay packet, Middlesbrough's gamble of hiring highly paid foreigners seems to be backfiring.

They stand 15th in the Premiership table, with one point from their last six matches – nine places below their station

when Juninho started the influx in November last year. Jamie Pollack, the local lad pushed out by Emerson, was ironically in Bolton yesterday, looking to secure a quick release from his Spanish club, Osasuna.

Robin Nichols started following The Boro, as they are known, refuting one of them: his resignation. His message was delivered on Middlesbrough's "Lewiwire" telephone line, which also trumpeted the launch of a book chronicling the club's 100 years.

"From Doom to Boom," it seems, was a premature choice of title.

League clubs end strike threat

The threat of a strike by Nationwide League players was ended yesterday when League clubs agreed a new funding deal with the Professional Footballers' Association.

Under the terms of the new deal, the PFA will receive £750,000 per year for five years, with a further £600,000 a year allocated by the clubs to spend on mutually agreed projects.

The first payment, replacing the £560,000 the union received last season, will go on benevolent packages, insurance and player education. The second sum will be allocated following discussions between the clubs and the PFA, although the precise process has yet to be determined.

The new package was agreed following a 30-minute discussion by chairmen and representatives of all 72 clubs in London. The Football League secretary, Andy Williamson, said: "Obviously we are pleased that this saga has now been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. It means that supporters and our commercial partners can be assured that there will be no disruption to the League's programme."

The PFA had ballot its members on strike action after the clubs scrapped the long-running tradition of paying the union a 10 per cent levy from television screening rights. This season the League began a five-year, £1.25m TV deal with BSkyB, and the PFA chief executive, Gordon Taylor, initially demanded that the payment be restored.

However, after the players from the 72 clubs made their vote – understood to be overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action – Taylor pulled back from the brink in order to begin further negotiations. Those talks clearly bore fruit, although Williamson stressed that there had been "compromise" on both sides.

The Football League president, Gordon McKeag, was yesterday served notice to quit after clubs overwhelmingly backed a call for a radical overhaul of the League's structure.

The Ipswich chairman David Sheepshanks, Ron Noades of Crystal Palace, Jonathan Hayward of Wolves and Oldham's Ian Stott proposed the change which will see the seven-man board replaced by a new nine-member body.

While McKeag will keep his title until he steps down next summer, he will immediately relinquish his position as board-chairman if the move is agreed at an emergency general meeting of clubs next month.

Scramble for pay TV, page 21

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football

FA CUP: 1st ROUND
Wrexham v Millwall (7.45)

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

FIRST DIVISION
Dagenham v Luton Town (7.45)

SHEFFIELD IRISH LEAGUE First Division
Newry v Dublin (7.30)

HARP NATIONAL LEAGUE OF NORTHERN IRELAND Premier Division
Coleraine v University College Dublin (7.45); Dundalk v Strabane (7.45)

Cricket

TOUR MATCH (First day of friendly): Australia v England (1.45)

ICE SKATING British Championships (1.45)

SNOKER: UK Championships (prelims)

SWIMMING: British Grand Prix (Lee Valley)

TELEVISION: Guardian Direct National (Telford)

TODAY'S NUMBER

159

The number of goals last night Wright has now scored for Arsenal, following his two in the Coca-Cola Cup against Stoke City on Wednesday. Wright needs another 20 to break Cliff Bastin's record and become the all-time leading scorer at Highbury.

Powling's paupers can cash in



Sudbury are ready to surprise Brighton in tomorrow's first round. Rupert Metcalf reports

If ever a team seemed ripe for plucking by hopeful FA Cup giantskillers, it is Brighton and Hove Albion. Bottom of the Nationwide League and beset by worries over where – or even if – they will be playing home games next season, it is difficult to imagine how their morale can sink any lower.

Sink it will, though, if they lose away to the Suffolk side, Sudbury Town, in tomorrow's first-round tie. While the humiliation for Brighton would not be as extreme as it was in 1973, when as an old Third Division team under Brian Clough's management they were beaten 4-0 at home by Walton and Hersham, it would still be hard to bear.

Much to the chagrin of their long-suffering supporters, the Sussex seaside club are already something of a laughing stock for football's chattering classes, and defeat tomorrow would make an embarrassing situation far, far worse.

It might be expected that Sudbury's manager is only too happy to hear about his opponents' ongoing misfortunes, in the belief that they give his side a greater chance of victory. Richie Powling is, however, full of sympathy for Jimmy Case, his opposite number, and everyone else who cares about beleaguered Brighton.

"No one likes to see a club

in trouble, especially one with such a Cup tradition, but I'm sure they'll turn things round," Powling said.

Their supporters might not be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but when a club hits rock bottom something normally happens to pick them up again, and I'm sure that will be the case with them."

However, Powling of course hopes that Brighton's fortunes do not take a turn for the better after until this weekend. He is realistic about his side's chances of success, though. "If we're honest, eight times out of 10 they're going to beat us," he said, "but the Cup is about dreams and banana skins and we just hope that this might be one of them."

"For the neutral fan, this is one of the ties of the round," Powling added. "They're not having a good season, with all their troubles, and they could be there for the taking. We've obviously got a chance."

Powling knows something of the highs and lows of football. As a tough little wing-half and an England youth international, he signed professional forms for Arsenal in 1973. Over the course of five seasons at Highbury, however, he only managed to appear in 55 League games, before a serious knee injury ended his playing career.

Powling moved on to Barnet,



Team changes go up on a blackboard on the toilet wall at the picturesque Priory Stadium, home of Sudbury Town, who are managed by Richie Powling (inset). Photograph: Adam Scott

where he started learning the managerial trade under Barry Fry. After spells in charge of Tiptree and Harwich, two Essex Eastern Counties League clubs, he has been manager of Sudbury since 1992. Now 40, he is employed full-time by the Dr Martens League Premier Division club.

Although this is their debut appearance in the first round of the FA Cup, Sudbury have played at Wembley more recently than Brighton. They went there for the FA Vase final (which they lost to Tamworth in a replay at Peterborough) in 1989 – six years after Brighton's FA Cup final. In 1990 Sudbury were promoted from the Eastern Counties League to the Southern (now Dr Martens) League, in which Powling took them up to the Premier Division in 1994.

It will be hard to rise any higher, though. "We're the parents of this league," Powling explained. "Sudbury's only a small little market town, so we struggle. We can't afford to get involved in the transfer market."

Although their Priory Stadium is picturesque, it is inadequate for anything loftier than their present level. Sudbury are awaiting planning permission for a new stadium, which they hope to start building within the next two years – so a continuation of this season's Cup run will provide much-needed revenue as well as much-appreciated prestige.



Brolin fears for his future

Sugar sticks to his guns

Leeds United's unsettled Swedish striker Tomas Brolin fears that his career may be over following the collapse of his loan move to Sampdoria

The Swedes international believes it is unlikely that any club will employ him, after he failed a medical as he was on the verge of signing for the Italian Serie A side until the end of the season, with a view to a permanent £2m move.

"It's going to be tough. Word gets around," said Brolin, whose chances of moving to Italy were scuppered by a metal staple in his foot.

The 26-year-old was astonished by the doctor's decision that he would have to have the staple and screws – inserted after he broke his foot in November 1994 – removed before he could be passed fit.

Doctors at his three previous clubs – Parma, Leeds and FC Zürich – had all passed him fit, Brolin claimed.

"I met Sampdoria in Lyon and negotiated. The only thing remaining was a doctor's certificate and they sent me to a doctor for an examination," the Leeds forward explained.

"It was a purely routine thing and the thing I was least concerned about. And then the doctor said the staple had to be taken out before he would recommend me to Sampdoria. He thought the staple would give me problems in training and games."

"I was in shock when I left the doctor's. I can hardly believe it would end up like this."

Brolin has had a stormy 18 months since leaving Parma for Leeds for £4.5m. He fell out

with the former Leeds manager, Howard Wilkinson, and has been unable to patch things up with the new manager, George Graham, who tried to prevent Brolin continuing his loan with Zürich.

Leeds threatened legal action if he did not return to Elland Road. Brolin then threatened to retire and, ironically, he may be forced into that if he decides not to have the staple removed.

"I don't have much hope that Sampdoria will change their minds," he added, saying it would take six to eight weeks after an operation before he could play.

Reports linking both Tottenham Hotspur and Leicester City with another Swedish international forward, Jesper Blomqvist, have been quashed by the announcement that the

Tottenham Hotspur plc chairman, Alan Sugar, warned shareholders at the company's annual general meeting yesterday of the "most devastating implications" of last year's European Union Bosman ruling on the transfer system.

Sugar insisted that the Bosman ruling, which allows players to move within Europe on free transfers at the end of their contracts, is a tremendous threat to the future of the game. He said: "We've faced all sorts of disasters in every season since I've been at the club but nothing as damaging as the effects of the Bosman ruling."

"It is the greatest danger facing this club and the rest of football. Even clever people such as Sir John Hall at Newcastle don't understand the ramifications of Bosman."

Sugar added the industry has "not yet seen the worst of it", adding that the ruling is a "liability for [football] agents to print money". Agents are now telling players not to sign long-term contracts, and this is undermining Tottenham's plan to build a strong squad of depth based on a strong youth policy.

Sugar claimed. He said it is up to English clubs to stand up to the agents – to "hard nose" and "be tough".

Tottenham investors' anger against the club's management was directed at the club's failure to make any major signings for the current season, which is now one third over.

One shareholder drew loud applause when he said that some members of the club's playing staff are "not good enough for Tottenham Hotspur. We want the best", he said.

Sugar and the team manager, Gerry Francis, said the search for quality players is continuing, but the competition is tough. Sugar said it remains his personal goal to win the Premiership, but "these things cannot be achieved in a flash-in-the-pan manner."

Sugar convinced the AGM that the club was in safe hands. He said: "People question my motives at Tottenham but the only thing I've got out of the club since 1991 is unadulterated stick."

"The profits belong to the club and not me. I see it as a personal challenge to make Tottenham successful. I will probably never be a popular character here, no chairman ever is, but you could have had Robert Maxwell."

A tale of a Romanian referee and a Portuguese hotelier

Portugal

Aberdeen and their former manager, Alex Ferguson, have unwittingly been linked this week with a bribery scandal which has been causing a stir in the Portuguese press.

Portuguese police have questioned a businessman over his allegations that he sought to bribe a Romanian referee on behalf of FC Porto 12 years ago, prior to a European Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final against the Dons when the Manchester United manager was in charge at Pittodrie.

Fernando Barata, a hotel owner and the former chairman of another Portuguese club, Farense, has claimed that he had been asked by Porto to

speak to the referee before the first leg. He said he had been asked to fix a 3-0 victory for Porto, but has not said how much money was offered.

Porto won both the home and away legs 1-0.

Porto have fiercely denied the allegations but Uefa, European football's governing body, has sought an explanation from the Portuguese Football Association. The referee, Ioan Ignat, also claimed ignorance of the bribery claims.

"I'm totally surprised about these allegations," Ignat said in Bucharest yesterday. "I don't know this person who is making accusations. I've never spoken to him." He said Porto had provided all three Romanian officials for the match with air tickets, accommodation and food.

Brazil

There is, it seems, never a peaceful weekend in the Brazilian championship. A

goalkeeper beaten up by fans following a league match last Sunday underwent surgery on Tuesday. Ricardo Pinto, of Atletico Paranaense, needed a three-hour operation after a small clot developed on his brain.

Pinto was injured following his team's 3-2 win away to the bottom club, Fluminense, in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. He suffered concussions and needed stitches in a head wound after dozens of Fluminense fans scaled the fences around the pitch after the final whistle. Some attacked Pinto, who lashed out before being knocked to the ground. He was carried to the dressing room by Atletico officials. A Fluminense official said Pinto was to blame for the incident. "He provoked the fans. There is not a fence in the world that could contain an enraged multitude."

The previous weekend,

there was chaos at the Mara-

cana stadium when directors from both clubs interrupted a league game between Vasco da Gama and Botafogo to protest at refereeing decisions.

Davies in line for Test recall

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWITT

The wizard is back – well, almost. Jonathan Davies was named yesterday in a 26-strong Welsh squad for the one-off Test with Australia in just over a fortnight's time, and if the legendary outside-half survives the next section debate and wins a place in the starting line-up, he will complete the most remarkable comeback of modern times.

At 34, Davies is finally beginning to rediscover some zest for his country's national game, much to the surprise of those who watched him disappear off his shell last season after

the unprecedented razzmatazz of his return from rugby league.

Older, wiser and, if truth be told, a fair bit slower than when he last pulled on the only red shirt that matters in Wales – a union shirt – six years ago, he has nevertheless turned in some high-quality performances for Cardiff over the last three months and has been duly rewarded by the national coach, Kevin Bowring.

Davies joins fellow outside-halves Neil Jenkins and Arwel Thomas in the squad, and if he squeezes past them and faces the Wallabies, he will add to the 27 caps he so memorably won between 1985 and 1988. He can also boast 14 league appear-

ances for Wales and 13 for Great Britain – ample testament to his all-round brilliance as a rugby footballer.

"It's been difficult coming back into union but I'm delighted to have this opportunity," he said on hearing the news of his call-up. "There are three outside-halves in the squad but I've got a chance of playing, which is more than I'd have been if I still outside the squad."

"It's nice to be recognised at the ripe old age of 34. I've had a run of games in the No 10 jersey for Cardiff, I feel quite comfortable with my rugby at the moment and I'm sure my experience will be of help."

Bowring, who has been impressed with Davies' control and clear-headed decision-making in recent weeks, has also found room for three other league refugees: the Swansea centre Scott Gibbs and two forwards, the tight-head prop David Young of Cardiff and the flanker Richard Webster of Bath. There is also a member of the Quinell family in the squad, although not the one everyone expected to see.

Scott Quinell, who has been embroiled in an embarrassing public wrangle over international payments since he joined Richmond from rugby league giants Wigan in the summer, stays on the outside looking in while his club-mate and brother Craig, who has been the more eye-catching of the two over the early months of the campaign, wins a place as one of three second rows.

Despite reports that Scott has settled his differences with the Welsh Rugby Union treasury, Terry Cobner, the director of rugby, said yesterday that he had been unable to finalise matters with the player's agent, Mike Buron.

Four players who took part in Wales' last home international match, the narrow defeat by France in September, are missing from the latest selection. The Liaoelli centre Nigel Davies, who captained the side that night, is still struggling with injury, as is club colleague Mike Voyle, the second-row forward. The other absences are the Neath hooker Barry Williams, who scored a try inside the first minute of his Test debut, and the Pontypridd flanker Martyn Williams.

If everyone signed under duress it would be a recipe for disaster. Let's get the problem sorted so we can spend the next five years building up the game. Serious damage is being caused at the moment, from which we could take an age to recover."

The England pack leader Jason Leonard yesterday added his voice for a commonsense approach from both sides. The Harlequins captain, who wins his 50th cap against Italy tomorrow week, said: "I think I can speak for all the players when I say we want this sorted out as soon as possible. A solution has to be found."

Players 'in danger' after withdrawal

Rugby's internecine power battle has bordered on the farcical for the past nine months, but even the cynics stopped laughing yesterday as fears for players' safety grew in the aftermath of the latest breakdown in talks between the leading professional clubs and their governing body, writes Chris Hewitt.

Once Epru, the clubs' umbrella organisation, took the predictable step of formally withdrawing the top 100 players from the forthcoming programme of divisional matches – a direct result of the collapse of talks with Rugby Football Union representatives Northampton on Wednesday – potential repercussions of doing under-strength sides bring tourists as powerful as ascendancy, the Junior Springs and, in particular, Argentina took centre stage. Tony Jorden and Phil Keighley, leading lights in the London division, were put in the position of having to replace a team full of top-level performers with a hodge-podge collection of relative unknowns from Rosslyn Park and Havant, two Third Division sides, for next Wednesday's match with the Pumas. "It's symbolic," Jorden said. "My worry is that players from that level could be exposed to danger in the scrums. This is causing incredible confusion among the players, who are the most important element."

Richard Hill, the Gloucester coach, had already withdrawn three of his leading players from the South-West side who face the South Africans at Exeter on the same day. "They are vulnerable playing in such a weak team," he explained.

Apart from the safety concerns, the Epru boycott makes a mockery of the national management's selection plans for the England A team, who play all three touring sides in the space of four days next month. At the moment the squad is drawn entirely from Epru clubs.

Epru was still waiting for a response to their request to address the entire RFU committee a week today. Peter Wheeler, the chief executive of Leicester and one of the club's regular negotiators, fanned the flames by raising the renewed possibility of a breakaway by the senior sides.

"We'll be writing to each individual member of the RFU asking for the chance to talk to the full committee before this thing goes further than anyone would wish it to," said the former England and British Lions hooker. "We do not want to leave the union but unless we do we may not get fair treatment. I'm getting bored with saying 'this is the week we get an agreement'. I've been saying that for the last nine months."

If everyone signed under duress it would be a recipe for disaster. Let's get the problem sorted so we can spend the next five years building up the game. Serious damage is being caused at the moment, from which we could take an age to recover."

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Underwood still marking time

DAI LLEWELLYN

e Heineken Cup seems to be bypassed England's most vital wing, Rory Underwood, started in just one match – against the Borders – and briefly as a replacement against the French side during Leicester's unbeaten run through Europe. Tomorrow, Underwood, who scored 49 tries in 85 caps for England, must once more kick on the replacements' list for the quarter-final visit of the Harlequins. The 33-year-old pilot received a few kind words yesterday from captain, Dean Richards, who said to him that he's been in the same situation with England and I can relate to how he

feels," Richards said. "What you have to do is get your head down and carry on working hard."

Underwood's place has been taken by Leon Lloyd, 19, a player Richards describes as "an outstanding talent who is getting better with each game he plays". But the Tigers captain added: "In my eyes, Rory Underwood is the world's No 1 fly-half. Obviously Rory is a little upset but at the same time he is rarely going to go."

Bob Dwyer, Leicester's director of coaching, said: "I believe, and so do the other selectors, that his form has not been there. On the other hand, his last game, I thought, showed a fair bit of improvement, and his application to training has been 100 per cent. In fact since he has been dropped he has re-

ally done extra work. One of

Richards' difficulties is that he can't train as often as he or I like because of his job."

If Carling selected at centre England, has been released as the Harlequins' half for tomorrow's game, Mike Catt, the new No 10 for England, has been given the kicking responsibilities for both in their Cup quarter-final clash tomorrow against Cardiff. Jon Callard, the club's top points-scorer this season, has been dropped as full-back in favour of the Wigan rugby league star Jason Robinson.

The Leicester Tigers' traditional Christmas clash with the Barbarians on 27 December has had to be switched to Tuesday, 25 February, because of fixture conflicts.

Bates makes early departure



Greg Rusedski cracks a forehand during his win over Miles MacLagan at Telford yesterday. Photograph: David Ashdown

Bates makes early departure

Tennis

DERRICK WHYTE
reports from Telford

Jeremy Bates, who carried the hopes of British tennis for the best part of a decade, was beaten 6-3, 6-4 by Paul Robinson, a 22-year-old left-hander from Northampton, in the second round of the Guardian Direct British National Championships at Telford yesterday.

Bates, 34, the former British No 1 and winner of this title six times, retired from serious tour-

nament play after Wimbledon this year but most people still expected him to beat Robinson even though he insists he is "playing only for fun" this week.

Robinson, who had beaten the fourth-seeded Mats Wilander in the first round, was always in control, breaking Bates' service twice in each set and losing his own just once in the match.

Robinson won the first set in 29 minutes after three successive breaks had left him leading 3-2 with service to follow and then won the second set in 30 minutes with breaks in the fifth

and ninth games to move into the quarter-finals.

Bates is shortly to take over as manager for National Training and Robinson said: "It did cross my mind that I was playing only for fun but I thought, 'Alfred, my coach, said it would do me a lot of good if I played well.' I had never played Jeremy before but I have a lot of respect for him because he was our top player for so long. But I told myself not to think about that."

Greg Rusedski, the British No 2, survived a difficult match

having his service broken twice by Miles MacLagan, the West of England player, in the opening set to trail 5-2. But he won the next four games to lead 6-5. MacLagan then held serve to force a tie-breaker but Rusedski won 7-1 and eventually the match 7-6, 6-4.

Samantha Smith, the British women's No 1 had a terrible day, losing her quarter-final match with Claire Taylor 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 before being criticised by LTA officials for speaking out about the state of the British game.

Gallian back on board

Cricket

England A will recall the trio who missed their victory over South Australia for the fourth-day match against the Australian Cricket Academy in Mount Gambier, which starts today.

Jason Gallian, a former graduate of the Australian Academy, returns after sustaining a hand injury in the opening tour defeat against a New South Wales XI in Tamworth.

The four champions of golf's

major completed a round-and-a-half of the scheduled

36-hole event, with nine holes still to be played today.

New rule improves game

Hockey

There is little doubt that the no offside rule introduced at the start of the season has improved hockey as a spectator sport, writes Bill Colwill.

Surprisingly, and in spite of the high scoring by certain sides as Doncaster, who seem to have come up with ideas ahead of others to take advantage of the greater freedom, there has not been a vast

Maligned Atlanta meets targets

Olympic Games

Billy Payne, head of the Atlanta Committee for this summer's Olympics, has announced that the Games broke even.

Payne confirmed that the Games would meet their £1.1bn budget. "We will break even, and maybe have a few dollars left over, but not much," Payne said. "We will tell the IOC [International Olympic Committee] that our expense and revenue targets were met."

The Atlanta Games were the first financed entirely by private funds. After recent speculation of a possible deficit, the IOC was anxious to get Payne's assurance that the Games would finish in the black.

Payne's report to the IOC comes amid continuing criticism of Atlanta. A report prepared by European Olympic officials is scathing on several issues. It says the Olympic village was cramped and overcrowded, the food was bad, transportation was a mess and the ambience created by over-commercialism was "cheap and tawdry".

Meanwhile, the IOC president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, has praised the Barcelona Games as the best of all time and said the Atlanta Olympics were marred by a long list of shortcomings.

Samaranch said he did not proclaim the Atlanta Games with the usual post-Olympic superlative because of the multitude of problems ranging from transport bottlenecks to technology failures. "I was right by not talking of the 'best Games ever,'" Samaranch claimed.

He said that he had also withheld the superlative "best Games ever" after the Sarajevo Winter Olympics in 1984, in Albertville in 1992 and "I believe also in Los Angeles in 1984".

"I only say that when it is true. No one can dispute that Lillehammer were the best Winter Games and Barcelona the best Summer Games."

Steelers face European test

Ice hockey

Sheffield Steelers will be looking to maintain the recent resurgence of the sport in Britain when they take on some of Europe's best teams in Finland this weekend.

In midweek Great Britain moved a step closer to qualifying for the Olympics for the first time in 50 years with a convincing 5-0 defeat of Slovenia. Now Alex Dampier's Steelers try to back up Britain's achievements with a decent show in the European Cup semi-finals.

It will not be easy. At the same stage two years ago, Cardiff Devils scored three goals and conceded 40 in a pointless crusade to Minsk. Steelers are unlikely to surrender as easily, which is mainly due to the new Superleague and the arrival of North Americans and Canadians on these shores.

Steelers take on the Norwegian champions, Storhamar, in today's opener. Tomorrow they face their toughest test against the host side, HPK Hameenlinna, before wrapping up the three-game series the following night against the Belarusians, Polymir Khimik Novopolotsk.

"Finland will be a huge leap for us," the Steelers' coach, Alex Dampier, said. "We are all looking forward to it."

no players after a £2.7m cash boost from a group of local major investors. The remaining money will go towards the building of a new 6,000-seat stand at the ground.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY: Cardiff 3 (Brett 1, 2), Darmstadt 2 (D. Cunha 1, 1), Hanover 2 (H. Klemm 1, 1), Ingolstadt 1 (G. Grotzki 1), Kassel 1 (J. Schmid 1), Leipzig 1 (M. Klemm 1), Mainz 1 (T. Klemm 1), Nuremberg 1 (C. Schmid 1), Stuttgart 1 (S. Klemm 1), Trier 1 (T. Klemm 1). WEDNESDAY'S LAST RESUME: 1.00pm, Cardiff vs Ingolstadt; 1.30pm, Ingolstadt vs Cardiff; 2.00pm, Ingolstadt vs Nuremberg; 2.30pm, Ingolstadt vs Stuttgart; 3.00pm, Ingolstadt vs Trier; 3.30pm, Ingolstadt vs Cardiff; 4.00pm, Ingolstadt vs Ingolstadt.

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Powling's paupers

Sudbury could be the surprise packet in the FA Cup, page 26

sport**Return of Welsh wizard**

Jonathan Davies eyes Test recall against the Wallabies, page 27

Big changes promised by Strachan

Football

TOMMY STANIFORTH

The new Coventry City manager, Gordon Strachan, yesterday gave a "do things my way or there will be changes" ultimatum to his players as he surveyed the wreckage following the worse possible start to life in the Highfield Road hot seat.

The Coca-Cola Cup has not been Strachan's favourite competition in recent years, with his previous club, Leeds United, suffering a string of embarrassing results against lower division opposition most notably Third Division Mansfield two years ago.

But even they paled into insignificance compared with Wednesday's 1-0 third-round replay home defeat to Second Division Gillingham — a performance the like of which Strachan will not tolerate again.

Strachan, reflecting in the aftermath of his first match since replacing Ron Atkinson, said: "If I fail it will be because we've done things my way and not anybody else's way."

"The performances will change and, if the players listen to what I have to say, and play to the level of standard and effort I require, then they should be all right."

"If they decide to join me and where I'm wanting to go with the club, then fine, but if not then there will have to be changes, it is up to the players."

"Maybe on this last occasion the lads were too nervous and trying too hard to get me a win. I don't know about that, but certainly myself and everyone con-

nected with the club can't put up with a performance like that again."

Gillingham were well-organised and wanted it more than us. They wanted to win the scrappy ball more than us and it's when you win the battle that you can play the football."

Strachan admitted: "I had some horrendous results in the League Cup at Leeds. I've had hody blows before but that doesn't mean that it softens the pain this time around. We've also got to be very brave about Wednesday's game and look in the mirror and say: 'This will never happen again.'

"Leeds had those knockbacks but went on to achieve great things like winning the League championship and qualifying for the European Cup. We've also got to look to bounce back — starting with Wimbledon on Saturday."

Strachan hinted that he is likely to encourage a more direct "shoot-on-sight" policy after his side's chances could be counted on one hand. He said: "If your style of football is very nice-looking but there are no shots on goals or crosses as the end product, then it is failing. There were times against Gillingham when we played some nice football without getting anything."

Strachan at least may take heart from the comments of his striker Noel Whelan, who is determined to repay the faith shown in him by his new manager after being charged with drink-driving and becoming involved in a training-ground fight with his team-mate, Dion Dublin.

Whelan said: "I have messed up. I have got myself a bad name by doing what I did and also earned the club some bad remarks which isn't fair. I want to rectify my mistakes by doing well, getting sorted out and scoring some goals."

Charlton's England Under-21 defender Jamie Stuart could be back in action within two weeks after being injured at Liverpool on Wednesday. The Charlton manager, Alan Curbishley, believed his 20-year-old left-back had suffered a broken leg during a challenge with Michael Thomas in his side's 4-1 Coca-Cola Cup replay defeat at Anfield. However, X-rays revealed that Stuart, who was carried off in the 56th minute, had suffered only severe bruising.

Neil Ruddock looks likely to retain his place in the Liverpool starting line-up and revive his Premiership career at Leeds on Saturday. His manager, Roy Evans, gave him his chance against Charlton at the expense of Phil Babb and Ruddock responded superbly. Babb had been an ever-present this season but paid the price for a poor game in the 3-0 defeat against Blackburn. Now the former Tottenham defender appears set for a run in the team after withdrawing a transfer request.

Evans saluted him following the victory over Charlton: "Razor has had to be patient. But we have thrown him in and he has responded in a way we would have hoped."

"We have a big squad and that can give you a headache. We have a lot of good players and it is a problem many people would like to have."



Jeremy Bates feels the pressure as he bows out of the National Championships in Telford yesterday

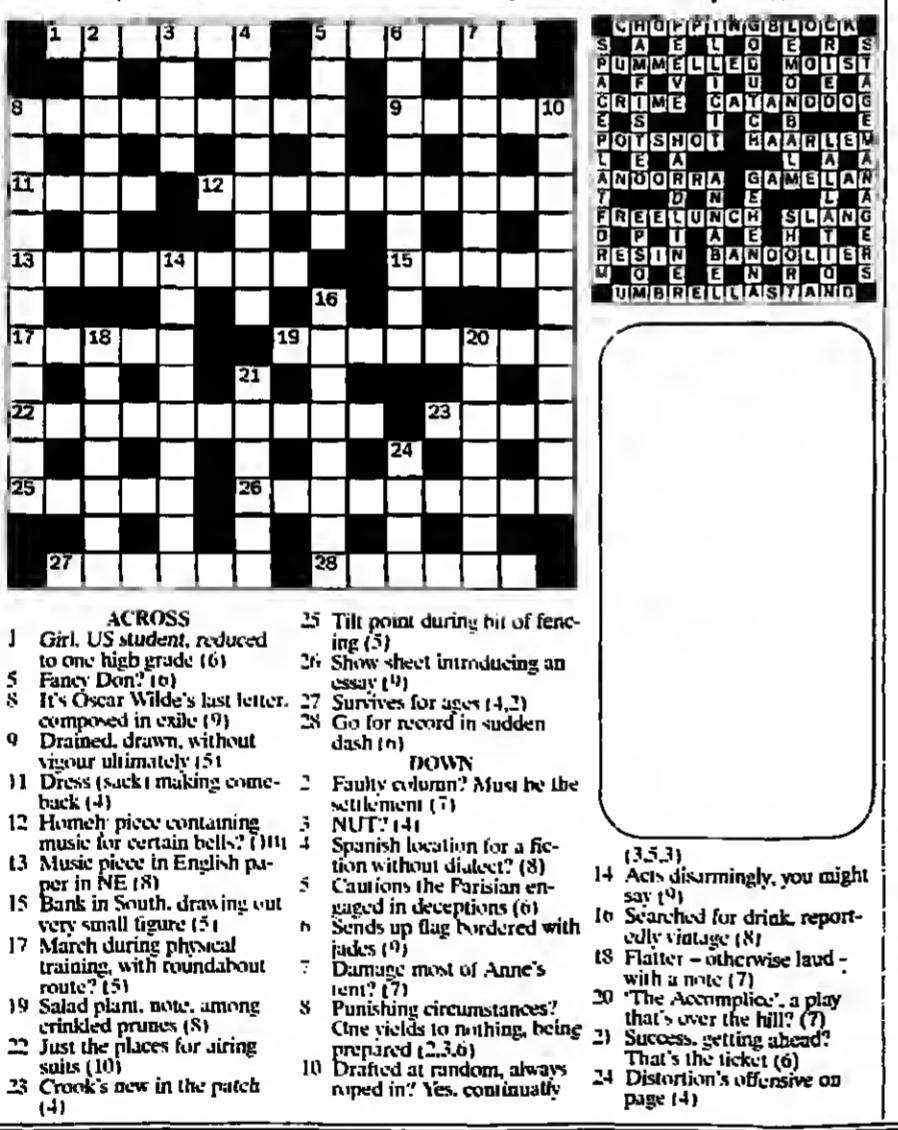
Report, page 27; photograph, Allsport.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3145, Friday 15 November

By Mass

Monday's Solution



Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford.

Friday 15 November 1996 Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

Botham back in England fold

Cricket

ADAM SZRETER

No sooner has Raymond Illingworth turned his back on the England Test scene than Ian Botham, effectively barred from office during Illingworth's term as chairman of selectors, has strolled in at the invitation of David Lloyd, the England coach, and will act as technical adviser on this winter's tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand.

Botham, who has been limited to media work since his retirement as a player three years ago, will be on the winter tour as a Sky TV commentator. But, as Lloyd revealed yesterday, he

will also be involved in bowling coaching as England try to prepare for next summer's Ashes series against Australia.

Lloyd said: "I have wanted Ian to be involved with us for some time. And this winter we will be using his technical skills — especially on the bowling side. Ian is very happy to be asked — and the invitation has come from me. I have been mates with him for a long time and this is a personal arrangement."

It is not thought that any money is involved but Botham's unofficial appointment represents a major coup for Lloyd, who took over as England coach on a full-time, two-year

contract at the end of the summer after initially being given the job on a trial basis back in April.

The England team leave for their 14-week tour on 25 November and Botham is expected in Zimbabwe shortly before the first of two Tests against the Zimbabweans either side of Christmas. England then play three Tests in New Zealand in the New Year.

Botham was frequently outspoken during his record-breaking and turbulent Test career, most notably in his description of the England selectors as "gin-swilling doddgers". That and a number of other transgressions, including smoking

cannabis — for which he was banned for three months — and being charged after an assault during an aeroplane flight in Australia, ensured that Botham would not find it easy to get back into the England set-up at any level following his final Test match, against Pakistan at Lord's in 1992.

At the start of last season he was nominated as an England selector by Northamptonshire and Derbyshire but was soundly beaten in the election by Graham Gooch and David Graveney. Botham's newspaper and television commitments, plus his own admission that he did not relish the prospect of watching endless hours of cou-

ted cricket, undoubtedly counted against him.

Later in the summer, along with his former England team-mate Allan Lamb, Botham lost a protracted and costly legal action against the former Pakistan captain Imran Khan, which many observers felt did little for the game's image, or that of Botham himself.

Now Botham, whose coaching at the moment extends to the Sultan of Brunei's son, has been given the green light by Lloyd but, great all-rounder though he was, it remains to be seen whether he has the capacity to translate his extraordinary natural ability into language that gifted players can understand.

Damon Hill returned to the cockpit yesterday for the first time since winning the world championship. This is what happened...

Four weeks after winning the Japanese Grand Prix to clinch the Formula One World Drivers' Championship, Damon Hill was forced to take in another view of Suzuka's scenery.

Hill crashed heavily while testing tyres at the Suzuka circuit yesterday in his first session with his new Arrows team, but escaped unharmed. He was driving a Ligier for the planned two-day test — because he is too tall to fit in the Arrows car which has not yet been adapted for him — and lost control of his car at low speed on cold tyres on the exit of the hairpin and spun around before colliding with the wall on the inside of the track.

The impact ripped two corners off the car and wrecked the gearbox, causing the Arrows team to abandon testing a day early. The team were evaluating the Bridgestone tyres which they plan to use next season.

Hill triumphed at Suzuka on 13 October in his final grand prix



for Williams-Renault, who sacked him for the 1997 season and 21st in '91.

Hill had impressed his new team before crashing. He set a best lap of 1min 40.14sec, which broke the lap record for the car by more



Off target: The Ligier car (left) of the Arrows team towed off the Suzuka track after being crashed by Damon Hill (above)

Photographs: Empics

than 1.5sec. Hill said before: "The purpose of this was to get out there and see where they [the tyres] stand and what their potential is."

"There will be the opportunity to go into several different directions, I expect, so it's important for me to get up to

speed with them."

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